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**THE FAIR CAREW;  
OR,  
HUSBANDS AND WIVES.**

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**VOL. II.**



THE FAIR CAREW;  
OR,  
HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

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"Why did I marry?"—OTHELLO.

Ditto —LORD TOWNLY.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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# THE FAIR CAREW;

OR,

## HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE title of the Luttrell Arms had in it something so imposing to the ear of Selby, that she looked forward to it as to a harbour of peace and security; where she might take the repose she was so much in need of, till morning's dawn enabled her to proceed on her journey. By leaving Brackensbury very early, she hoped to be able to reach Stukely in time to attend morning service with the family.

Since her mother's unlucky correspondence with Hartley, and the evident misconception of her own sentiments which had resulted from it, Selby was proportionably eager to avoid all personal contact with his family. If she succeeded, as she now hoped to do, in escaping from the neighbourhood of the Hall unnoticed by its inhabitants, the adventure would serve, better than any verbal protestation, to

convince her husband of her wish to conform implicitly to the course of conduct he had prescribed to her.

But the inn, with its respectable sign, was but a fresh illustration of the oft-repeated warning to us not to prejudge either persons or places by their high-sounding names. The Luttrell Arms, though boasting luckily a pair of post-horses, was little more than a road-side public-house; and that by no means of the cleanest or neatest description: it was a sort of place that at any other time Selby would have been extremely loth to enter; but now her mind was too pre-occupied, and she was too grateful for any place of refuge distinct from Horton Hall, to be over nice about her night's accommodation.

Even the few advantages which the Luttrell Arms might boast of were but ungraciously accorded. From the ostler, who was the only person about the place who for some time made his appearance, she could get no satisfactory answer to her questions; and when the hostess herself came out, she declared her house was too full that night to allow of the lady having more than one room allotted to her, and doubted if she could even insure her a bed: but she would shew her to a room for the present, and see about it.

Appalled at the fresh difficulty thus thrown in the way of that quiet settlement for the night which seemed to her jaded spirits the one great blessing to be desired, Selby condescended to a tone almost of entreaty: "She would not mind where she was put: she would sleep on two or three chairs, or sit up all

night—anything, if they would but take her in for the next few hours.”

Thus urged, the woman suffered the luggage to be brought into her house; and led the way to a small room redolent of spirits and tobacco-smoke: but which seemed to the weary traveller a species of Paradise; for she saw in it a place of peace and independence, where she might throw off the apprehensions that had lately harassed her. Most fervent, therefore, was the exclamation—the earnest, “Thank Heaven!” that burst from her lips, when she found herself inducted as mistress of that miserable chamber. Here she was safe for the night: even her father would not, at that hour, dream of dislodging her; and the ease with which, under the pressure of circumstances, she had carried out her purpose thus far, encouraged her in the belief that her embarrassments were, for the present, at an end.

Unaccustomed as she was to act in the common affairs of life without the assistance of her mother, the idea of wandering thus in the darkness of night, solitary and unprotected—seeking literally a shelter for her head in a strange place and amongst strange people—how alarming would she not have thought it only a few days, nay, even a few hours ago: yet all had been accomplished with equal quickness and facility, and every imaginary fear had vanished before the real terror of a forced presentation to the Luttrels. Her cousins, the Luttrels! What would be her father’s astonishment could he penetrate the degree of relationship which *actually* existed between them! Then her thoughts taking a wider range,

she wondered within herself how—supposing she had indeed been bold and unfeeling enough to follow Carew into the presence of the family at the hall ; in what manner they would have received her.

By this time she concluded he had spoken of his daughter, and they were awakened to the consciousness that such a being as Selby Carew existed in the world. She would have given much to know what they were all saying, but consoled herself with the assurance that her father would soon follow her, and that then she should hear every particular ; and, in the mean while, there was something strangely fascinating in indulging these fancies about the Luttrels, in their immediate vicinity.

The quiet so essential to calm meditation, however, was not at present to be attained. Unhappily for Selby, this was the first Saturday in the month, on which occasion a certain club, called the “Free and Easy,” were accustomed to assemble at the Luttrell Arms ; and as the apartment in which they celebrated their orgies was divided from that which she occupied only by the thinnest possible partition, she was obliged to hear all that was passing, and found herself, ere long, unable to think in comfort.

Ignorant as she was of the general uniformity of such meetings, Selby attributed what was most offensive to her in the manners of her neighbours, to the vulgar elements of which the club was composed. She knew not that drunken humanity bears much the same character in all grades of society, and that had the wisest, the wittiest, and the most noble of the land been culled for the occasion, and

taken the place of these "base mechanics," sitting as long and carousing as deeply, they might, indeed, have been more grammatical in their tipsiness, but not one whit less gross and puerile. For in fact, except in that same minor article of orthography, where could the Free and Easy Club be said to differ from any other convivial meeting?

Here were toasts given, and speeches made—the latter interspersed with murmurs of "hear, hear," and coughing and sneers from the opposition; here was fierce disputation, and appeals to the "chair," which was worthily filled by the parish tailor—many years president of the Free and Easy, and as proud of his pre-eminence as any chairman who ever called a riotous assembly to order. There were fallings-out and in, and under the table, explanations and apologies; and as oaths grew louder and more difficult of utterance, there ensued much shaking of hands and protestations (almost tearful in their pathos) of eternal and unalterable friendship. And then, when all this tumult was at the wildest, and it seemed that nothing short of broken heads must be expected, the tailor's cracked voice exalted itself above the din, and some "gentleman" was "knocked down for a song"—for the Nightingale Club itself was scarcely more musically disposed; and of course there was a chorus to each verse, followed by obstreperous applause and much ringing of cups and cans, and thumping upon the table.

Vainly did Selby apply for some place of refuge remote from these disgusting revels: she felt ashamed that even her father when he rejoined her should

hear the style of language that was being forced upon her. The hostess, a bold, red-faced woman, who looked as if she herself had been partaking of these bacchanalian rites, gave her to understand, in a tone hardly civil, that this was the only apartment in the house ; and as for the club breaking up as yet, she was sorry the lady was disturbed by their singing : which she added resentfully, " Most people thought it quite a privilege to be admitted to hear. But the gentlemen of the Free and Easy generally kept it up till one or two in the morning, and of course as the members were all highly respectable, and the best of customers, it was not for her or hers to put any restraint upon them, as long as they behaved themselves orderly, and paid for what they took."

And she talked so fast, and with such an air of impudent defiance, that Selby shrank from holding further communication with her ; and, resolving to leave to her father the task of battling with this Bacchante, tried to be patient and hard of hearing. As she subsided into her rush-bottomed arm-chair, she likened herself to a parody of the lady in *Comus*, and marvelled whether the Satyrs of Milton's Masque gave, after their fashion, toasts and sentiments, and deferred to Comus as chairman of their sylvan company.

She had made the tea, the only refreshment she was disposed to take, but had no heart to drink it till the arrival of her father should set her more at ease. So long as the drunken chorus predominated over every other sound, it was to no purpose to listen for his approaching footstep ; but her eyes continued fixed upon the door, and when at last she beheld the

lock turn, and fancied she could distinguish a shuffling outside, she started to her feet, and flew to open it: giving way at once to a sense of relief, and a sort of terror which she had hitherto striven to repress.

"My dear father!" she exclaimed; "I am so inexpressibly glad to see you." But Carew was not, as she had presumed, alone, and her utterance was suddenly checked: there was a gentleman close at his shoulder—a stranger to her of course, and as she truly interpreted it, a Luttrell. Her look of discomfiture struck Carew, and he hastened to re-assure her.

Be it here remarked, by-the-bye, that the Mr. Carew who now made his appearance upon the scene, was a very different person from the careless, whistling, story-telling individual of that day's journey. It was, as we have seen, his custom to speak in a jeering strain of his relations, calling them "dons," "bigwigs," and so forth; and yet whenever cousin John chanced to be in the company of the Luttrells, he was sure to be on his best—ay, his *very* best behaviour. Now, therefore, meeting his daughter's advances with an easy and polished address, he said,

"Selby, my love, this gentleman," inclining respectfully towards his companion, "is Mr. Francis Luttrell, whom you have heard me mention so frequently—always one of my best and kindest friends; and he has taken the trouble to come down with me on purpose to persuade you to sleep at the Hall, instead of this very disagreeable place: which upon my word," looking round him, "is most unfit for a gentlewoman to pass the night in."

But Selby, who apprehended some manœuvre of



Carew's to be at the bottom of all this attention, was more pained by it than gratified : " They must fancy it a mere trick to get me introduced amongst them," she thought to herself ; and therefore, interrupting the stranger, who was beginning, in a courteous speech, to follow up Carew's introduction, she thanked him for the trouble he had taken on her account, but added—

" It was, I assure you, sir, a perfect misunderstanding of my father's," and she looked reproachfully at Carew, " or I should have been with my friends at Stukely long ago ; and as I mean to set off to them by the earliest possible hour, it can signify but little to me where I pass the intervening time : " and with a sort of passionate emotion, which under her peculiar circumstances, was natural and becoming, she finished by saying, " Were the place and people ten times as disagreeable to me as they are, I should prefer remaining where I am, to intruding myself where my company can, of course, be neither expected nor desired."

Mr. Francis Luttrell—who was by nature a fervent admirer of female beauty, and secretly favoured the reputation of being a distinguished connoisseur in that article—had been highly impressed by the appearance of his new cousin ; and this spirited announcement, delivered as it was with such an air of truth and feeling, did all that was wanting to establish her at once in his good opinion. For it is but justice to the discernment of the Luttrells, to observe that some doubts as to the perfect and entire simplicity of Carew's proceedings, so far as his daughter was implicated in their course, had arisen to the minds of most of them.

His sudden appearance amongst his relations had, as he shrewdly calculated, taken their affections at once by storm ; and the warmth and cordiality of his reception had even transcended his anticipations. As far, therefore, as himself was concerned, all had gone well ; and the good people of Horton had not shewn less facility than the generality of cousin John's auditors, in swallowing the short but glowing narrative in which it pleased him to account for his extraordinary disappearance and long absence from their society. Had not the situation of affairs in connection with the Luttrell Arms warned him to condense his style, he plainly saw that he might have amused them in this way for half the night, certain of attention and sympathy from the whole party. Mr. Luttrell himself being absent in town, formed at present no portion of the family group. Carew, though expressing due regret at this announcement, was, in fact, not a little relieved by it, and carried on his sketch of events, on or beyond seas, with a volubility all the easier, that he did not feel the influence of that gentleman's calmer character—his penetrating glance, and the searching questions as to dates and other trifling matters of fact, that would occasionally have ruffled the smooth flow of "our dear good cousin's" discourse.

Implicit belief, and a kind of pitiful admiration of him and his adventures, encouraged Carew to carry out the purpose of his visit to the Hall ; but when he introduced a partner as the theme of his eloquence—when it was borne in upon their reluctant convictions, that there was a daughter in the case : a Miss Carew, actually at that moment (and it

was twenty minutes past ten) waiting down at the Luttrell Arms to be invited into the bosom of their society—then, indeed, cousin John could discern a shade of reserve stealing across their geniality ; and it is worthy of remark, that the only portion of Carew's narrative for the correctness of which we can formally vouch, was in fact the very episode of all others that found least credit at Horton Hall.

It was but another reading of the old story of the sailor and his grandmother : the finding of Pharaoh's chariot wheels in the Red Sea, was admitted as a natural event in Jack's nautical reminiscences ; but when he described the flying fish he had met with by the way, the old lady's scepticism was excited to the utmost. We do not mean by this illustration, that they doubted of the existence or presence of this daughter of Carew's ; but it was hard to believe in what might be termed the fretwork, or ornamental part of the story : viz., her extreme shyness of coming amongst them, or her entire ignorance of her father's intention of bringing her to Horton that night.

Selby's conduct in going off to the inn, instead of abiding by Carew's injunctions to wait in the chaise till she was sent for, was some confirmation of his strange story ; and nevertheless, whatever might be the secret misgivings of the Luttrells, they were all agreed in the obvious propriety of receiving the young lady thus forced upon them by the rashness of cousin John—"thoughtless as ever, poor fellow !"—with the common civility due to one who had Luttrell blood in her veins. Above all, she must not be permitted to remain at the

Luttrel Arms,—a house where ill-fame had become so notorious, that the authorities had lately resolved on withdrawing its license; a carriage was therefore ordered to be got ready on the instant, to convey her back to the Hall, and on Mr. Francis devolved the office of inviting and escorting her thither: by good luck he had dined at the Hall that day, and was thus at hand to act in any matter of family perplexity that might arise.

Now, opinions standing thus doubtfully, and Mr. Francis, having undertaken his commission with a certain feeling that there was some portion of trickery lurking in the whole affair—and with a mind not wholly free from prejudice, where a daughter of Charlotte Carew's was to be the object of his constrained civility—was doubly pleased with the manners and appearance of his new acquaintance, and with the independent language in which she expressed herself. She was in every point so strikingly the reverse of what he had expected, that not a doubt of her sincerity remained to trouble him: whoever else might have been in fault, in bringing her there so abruptly, that “very lovely young person” must be blameless. Nor was Selby's impression of her new cousin less favourable: he was, she thought, exactly what Hartley's uncle ought to be; for in that interesting character could she alone regard him.

Though some years past fifty, he had little of the old man in figure or address: the former was tall and slender, the latter polished almost to the verge of formality; and yet, in spite of this rather studied

style, his manners possessed so much real kindness,—that true politeness of the heart—that it was impossible to feel restraint in his society.

This amicable disposition was now brought into play, by his attempts to soothe the wounded feelings of his fair friend : a strong and by no means unnatural pique, on account of the neglect displayed towards her by her father's relations, being, of course, the sole ground assigned by Mr. Francis for Miss Carew's evident disturbance. Avoiding as indelicate any direct allusion to this supposed cause of offence, he touched briefly on the estrangement which had hitherto separated the families ; but which the unexpected and joyful restoration of their dear and valued Carew had so effectually interrupted. Mr. Francis was himself interrupted at this point ; for the drunken voices in the next room, shouting out a fresh chorus, drowned the best part of his honied eloquence.

"To what a scene have you been subjected !" he exclaimed, looking round the chamber with disgust. "You must not stay here a moment longer !" and Carew, with a wink, perceived but utterly disregarded by his daughter, urged the propriety of not keeping the carriage waiting, as the family at the Hall kept early hours.

Selby felt keenly enough the impropriety of continuing in her present quarters ; yet her dread of Horton Hall—or rather of transgressing the express commands of her husband—still overruled every other consideration.

"It is impossible," she replied, her voice trembling and agitated—"it cannot be but they might

find me some room in the house, where I might rest for a few hours. If you, sir," appealing to her father, "would only speak to the people: they will not attend to me."

"But my dear Miss Carew," said Mr. Francis, "the house bears altogether so bad, so intolerable a character, that I assure you, even if those ruffians," with a stern look at the opposite wainscot, "were silenced, your friends must still disapprove of your remaining in such a place." And then she was told of the revocation of the license; while Carew followed up the matter with significant looks, directed only to his disobedient child, accompanied by paternal remonstrances intended for public edification: his regret, his actual remorse, at having thrown her into so improper a situation—a position so impossible for her to maintain—was expressed in the strongest language: still, though despairingly, Selby defended her forlorn post.

"Was there," she inquired, "no other house, no cottage in the village, where she might be lodged for the night, without intruding on Mrs. Luttrell?" And she urged the consideration that it would be for so *very* short a time: "surely some decent house might be found to receive her."

Carew bit his lip; for he was provoked at her obstinacy: to see her thus quarrelling, as one might say, with the nice, smooth, well-spread piece of bread-and-butter, so courteously and frankly tendered her, by him who, in the absence of his elder brother, must be considered as the head of the Luttrell family—his native good humour almost

deserted him, and he was well-nigh anathematizing her, as no child of his. Even Mr. Francis thought the young lady's opposition was being carried to an inconvenient length.

"Are Horton and its inmates so very distasteful to you, that you cannot bring yourself to rest there, even for the short time you propose to stay?" His words, though gently uttered, conveyed a certain reproach.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed with energy; "it is not that: do not, I beg, impute to me so wrong a feeling. I should consider myself only too much honoured by the notice of Mrs. Luttrell: but to enter her house at this time of night—to be forced upon her hospitality—excuse me, sir, but I would rather suffer any temporary inconvenience."

A bright thought struck Mr. Francis: "Why not then return with me to the Lodge?—to my house, instead of my brother's? My daughter will be charmed to receive you; and with her, a person more of your own age, you will stand on no forms of etiquette."

"Most kindly said, my dear Mr. Francis; and a capital idea!" exclaimed Carew: and Selby herself could make no valid objection to an arrangement which appeared so unexceptionable. Once fairly relieved from her apprehension of being forced into the presence of Hartley's parents (for she was ignorant of Mr. Luttrell's absence), all minor awkwardnesses were overlooked. The changed expression of her countenance: the grateful look with which she met the proposal of Mr. Francis, was a sufficient token of consent; and her father, seizing the hat

which she had thrown off as soon as she entered that odious little room, in his haste replaced it on her head hind-side before, and ran off to see about the necessary disposal of the luggage. At the same time, Mr. Francis, with an air of devoted respect, prepared to lead his fair cousin to the carriage; and a drunken shout from Comus and the Satyrs served to celebrate their departure from the Luttrell Arms.

As long as Carew remained in the carriage, the conversation was maintained between him and his cousin; for Selby was in a state of mind which rendered it difficult for her to utter a word, so confused did she feel at the strange turn her affairs had taken. But at the Horton gates they stopped to set down cousin John, who would not hear of their conveying him any further. As he kissed his daughter, and promised to make her apologies to Mrs. Luttrell, he gave her arm a significant squeeze, which seemed to imply,—“We have gained our point, and made good our footing in this land of milk and honey.” And the gay confidence with which he sprang out, waved his adieux to the carriage, and then commenced his brisk walk across the park, shewed how highly he was satisfied with the event of his manœuvres.

“Ever the same!” was the indulgent remark of Mr. Francis, as he watched the departure of his flighty kinsman. “The vicissitudes of his most wonderful destiny may have whitened his hair, and added a furrow or two to that handsome face; but there is still the same bright eye, beaming on all



things with the hopefulness of boyhood—the same frank, open disposition.”

But Selby felt much too indignant with her father to echo his praises just then.

Noticing her silence, Mr. Francis said, “ You are over-fatigued, my dear Miss Carew : and no wonder, considering the inconveniences to which our good but thoughtless friend has exposed you. I shall be truly rejoiced when you are restored to quiet and repose.”

There was so much gentleness and consideration for her feelings in every word which was uttered by this “ dear uncle Francis,” that Selby longed to confide in him all she might safely reveal : but, unhappily, a full explanation of her seemingly wayward conduct she dared not give ; and every expression of gratitude was stopped at once by his affectionate courtesies.

They soon arrived at the Lodge ; and so much had Selby’s spirits been revived by the kindness of its master, that she could now bear, with tolerable serenity, the prospect of coming under the eye and observation of other Luttrels besides Mr. Francis : nay, a hope—a shy and fluttering hope—dawned in that gentle heart, that this forced introduction to some part of her husband’s family, awkwardly as it had been brought to pass, might ultimately be the means of smoothing a way to the affections of them all. Yes, could she only persuade Hartley to think so, she began to believe that indeed all things might possibly have been ordered for the best.

## CHAPTER II.

BEFORE introducing our wandering heroine to the Lodge and its inmates, each individual of whom must needs be peculiarly interesting to her, let us give a passing sketch of the persons with whom she was to be associated.

Of Mr. Francis Luttrell little need be said. He had entered life with only the moderate expectations of a younger son; but subsequently he had been twice married, and in both instances had managed the affair discreetly, and not at all after the fashion of his cousin John. Now, therefore, though prudence and a family of three children forbade his vying in expense with some of his wealthier neighbours, and required him to limit his establishment, and add rooms to his cottage, instead of building a mansion outright; yet seldom has moderation worn a pleasanter form: when Mr. Francis talked of his strict adherence to economy, and the deprivations consequent upon a restrained income, his audience found it difficult to condole with him; so little accordance was there between the

comforts and elegances of Luttrell Lodge and the self-denying tone of its master.

A few years prior to this period, Mr. Francis Luttrell had again become a widower ; since which time, his household arrangements were conducted by his eldest daughter, the only child of his first marriage. Esther Luttrell was now verging on middle age ; but in early youth she had been accounted a beauty ; and, as the Luttrells in general were a handsome race, it followed that good looks were duly appreciated amongst them, and made a sort of family affair. More than one fair scion of their stock had been toasted at race-meetings and election-dinners, as the undisputed belle of the county ; Esther Luttrell, at seventeen, bade fair to keep up the charter ; and many were the speculations indulged by her friends as to the distinguished alliance such attractions might reasonably be expected to command : " Nothing under nobility touches Kitty."

But never, surely, was human calculation worse employed, or the perishable nature of female beauty more strikingly evinced, than on this occasion. There was nothing to account for such a change : neither sickness nor sorrow ; and yet the young lady's good looks deserted her, just as she was entering society and disposed to value them the most. Her complexion faded, her features sharpened and enlarged, her very eyes seemed to lose their brightness ; and the hair, once so beautiful and redundant fell off day by day : resisting the influence of bear's-grease and Macassar oil, or even

the more scientific experiments of her father, who dabbled a little in chemistry, in a small and gentlemanly way, and interested himself considerably in the fate of Miss Luttrell's head of hair.

Poor Esther! it was not only the decay of her early bloom she had to deplore: with the charms of her girlhood, she lost the only lover she had ever wished to retain. The Rev. Henry Goldwin—handsome, clever, well born, and rich—was leaving college just when Miss Luttrell was in the first glow of her beauty. They met at a county ball; and long before the neighbourhood had decided as to the young man's qualifications to aspire to the hand of one of the proud Luttrells, his young and lovely partner had made up her mind that he was entitled to come forward in any capacity he might think fit. Their acquaintance subsisted some time after this; its peculiar character, as usual, less remarked by their own familiar friends, than by less interested observers: and even they were often at fault; for young Goldwin's passion was of a sensitive nature, expressed less in words than by means of those unuttered signs—those seemingly trivial, yet certain, evidences of affection—which may pass unheeded by the standers-by, but are never misinterpreted by the object which inspires them.

To Miss Luttrell, the language, though mute, was but too intelligible. Many a man followed her more openly, and paid her higher compliments, than Mr. Goldwin; yet, with the freemasonry of true affection, she knew that he loved her far the best; and, while confiding in his preference, she

hardly wished for a more formal declaration of it. "Why should he tell me he loves me," she would say to herself, "when every look and tone of his voice declares I am as dear to him as he is to me?" And when he was by her side, she would tremble, lest he should pronounce those words which, delightful as they may seem when spoken, are full of embarrassment to a girl of seventeen.

But Miss Luttrell need not have alarmed herself: the words were *not* spoken; the vows *not* sworn. Even while meditating a formal proposal on the very next convenient opportunity, young Goldwin was called suddenly away from the fascinating neighbourhood of Brackenbury, to attend what was supposed to be the deathbed of his father. The old gentleman, nevertheless, recovered sufficiently to undertake a voyage to a milder climate; and this, his favourite son, was chosen to accompany him.

It is a painful predicament for the young and tender-hearted, when circumstances induce them to anticipate the death of a fellow-creature, as the only event which can insure their happiness. Esther would have been highly indignant, had such a charge been brought against her: and yet, why, after the departure of her lover, was she so anxious to consult the daily papers—a study she had never taken the slightest interest in, up to that period?—and why, as she turned their rustling pages, did she not follow the common custom and natural order of events, and read the list of births and marriages before glancing her eye over the more fatal record?

If her behaviour was dictated, in this respect, by any deeper feeling than mere curiosity, the culpability of the impulse might, perhaps, be forgiven, on consideration of its daily disappointment.

Contrary to all human (or *inhuman*) expectation, Mr. Goldwin, senior, went lingering on, hopeless of a permanent restoration; yet sufficiently revived by the influence of climate, to preserve his feeble existence. And thus season after season glided past, and buds became blossoms, and blossoms turned to fruit; till she, the blossom he had left budding so brightly in its paternal bowers—she, I say, took to wondering whether *all* the old gentlemen who went to Madeira for their health, were in the habit of living on to the highly respectable, but not always convenient age, of Henry Jenkins or old Parr.

At last, when more than two years had expired since the departure of the father and son, it was recorded one morning, in the one fashionable paper of the day, that, on the thirteenth instant, and in the seventy-first year of his age, Bernard Goldwin, Esq., of such-and-such a place and county, had breathed his last; “being universally regretted,” the advertisement farther stated, “by a large circle of friends and acquaintance.”

Young Goldwin’s filial cares thus ended, he hastened back to England; less anxious to take possession of his inheritance, than to solicit the heart which, he had not the smallest doubt, was already devoted to him. He knew that Miss Luttrell was unmarried, and to all appearance disengaged; now, therefore, having paid a hurried visit to his rela-

tions, he sought the presence of his beloved, with as much security of coming bliss as is compatible with that strange passion, whose very essence is said to be composed of doubts and fears.

He entered her father's house with a flushed cheek, an eager eye, and a voice faltering with emotion : he left it, at the expiration of barely half an hour, with a brow composed, a sober step, and a pulse as calm and regular in its throbbings as if he had been mounting the pulpit stairs to preach to a country congregation. He had seen, indeed, the object of his visit : but oh ! how lamentably changed was the fair image he had left behind him in all the pride of youthful loveliness ! Where was the bloom—where the ruby lips and flowing curls, that had charmed him then ? Gone—vanished—fled for ever ! and those mental attractions which, during the sway of her more meretricious charms, he had lauded so highly—her even temper, good sense, and high principle, were insufficient to bind him to her one instant longer. He never once dreamed of fulfilling the tacit engagement he had formed with her.

And so the Reverend Henry Goldwin departed ; and absorbed in mortified expectation and pensive thought, he slowly paced his mare up the hill which leads from Luttrell Lodge to the more open country, where the free air circled around, and somewhat revived the faculties of the astounded gentleman. Arrived at the summit of this eminence, he turned himself about, to observe that prospect whose confined limits had once seemed to him to enclose all that was requisite to perfect man's felicity—all that

was charming in nature. But now, divested of every romantic association, he saw in it only a fertile valley, with a genteel-looking house and grounds: the former, he was inclined to think, built without much attention to convenience; and the latter decidedly encumbered with foliage.

"See the advantages of travel," thought he. "If I had never seen any other country, I might still be fancying this spot an earthly paradise." And, with a smile, half triumph, half contempt, he placed his hat more jauntily on his head, and, cantering smoothly forward, blessed the good fortune which had prevented him from imprudently making *the* offer before leaving England. Again his horse was urged on, as if to dispel the horror of such an intolerable suggestion: the easy canter turned to a jovial trot; the trot became a gallop; and in an equal ratio, disappointment subsided into resignation and thankfulness, for what *he* called the will of Providence; till, like the lark which quivered above his head, his gratitude found vent in song, and he caught himself humming the last new dance that had found its way to Madeira, and remembered thereupon that he had performed its lively evolutions, its "hands-acrossing" and "poussettings" (terms now how foreign to the ears of a polking public!) with the youngest, and eke the fairest, of Admiral Freemantle's pretty daughters.

Many years after this, it fell to my lot to hear the Reverend Henry Goldwin—he had become Dr. Goldwin by that time—discourse, in a very eloquent sermon, on the nature and force of con-



science; the delicacy and inevitable action of that mysterious monitress; how she forces our memory back, not merely upon the darker crimes and fouler vices we have committed, but scourges us for the indulgence of our daily foibles: such failings as the world excuses and calls venial—our vanity, our paltry ambition, our carelessness of wounding the feelings of our neighbour when our own mis-called profit hangs in the opposite balance: that clause he dwelt upon particularly; and if ever mortal words could avail to touch the heart, that sermon, with its smooth yet pointed style, and bold delivery, must have raised a blush in many of his hearers: in short, he expatiated in a masterly manner on the innumerable evils included in that one sentence—"the love of self." And all this, being uttered with the graces of a finished orator, and the dignified placidity of one who blames the weakness of which his own heart is unconscious, and yet regards that weakness with mild compassion, I listened attentively, blessed my kind stars, and wondered at the man's impudence.

And what, in the mean while, were the feelings of Esther Luttrell? She had seen the animated look with which young Goldwin pressed to greet her, the unmistakeable ardour of the lover subside, as if by magic, into the calm civility of a common acquaintance; and the reason of the sudden change was not hidden from her: for she knew her beauty had somewhat faded. The door of her father's house closed upon him; and though she despised the frivolity of a passion which rested only on personal attractions,

she felt that a shadow, cold and dark, had fallen across the sunlight of her existence.

To no human creature, indeed, did Miss Luttrell breathe a hint of the real nature of her feelings; for she possessed a firmness of character which even this heaviest trial that can befall a woman was inadequate to overcome. Pride and delicacy both pointed out the only course remaining to save her from the sneers of society and the compassion of her false lover. Her increasing thinness, and the total decay of every trace of former beauty, could alone have betrayed what was passing in her mind; but so well did she act her part, and her assumed cheerfulness seemed so much that of a heart indifferent to all mankind, that she effectually deceived all the gossips of the place: even her nearest relations were misled, and never attributed the unhealthiness of her appearance to its real cause.

The story is old, as it is simple, and has little to distinguish it from the many similar occurrences which fall within our daily notice; yet there was one feature in the affair which gave it a certain peculiarity, and served in no small measure to embitter the trials of Miss Luttrell.

Contrary to her sincerest hope and expectation, Mr. Goldwin did not leave the neighbourhood of Horton, but settled for life in its immediate vicinity. The rich living of Brackenbury happened to fall vacant, shortly after his return from Madeira; he obtained the presentation to it, and poor Esther found that the internal tranquillity she had trusted to regain, through the entire removal of the false

friend by whom it had been overthrown, must still depend on the strenuous exertion of her own good sense and fortitude. As rector of her parish church, even were she able to shun his society six days in the week unremarked, yet on the seventh she was forced to see him—forced to listen to the voice whose flattering tones had ruined her peace of mind: and, what was worse than all, she was—despite her secret indignation at his frivolous abandonment of her—constrained to acknowledge that, in every respect except the rejection of her love, he was worthy of the fond admiration she had once lavished upon him.

Here lay Miss Luttrell's severest trial. Had she found that the warmth of her youthful fancy had deceived her in her opinion of his merits, the spell would have been broken, and her spirit freed from its thralldom: all his popularity, and the praises so universally bestowed on their young rector, from the earl's six unmarried daughters down to the old women in the workhouse—not one additional pang would they have caused her; supposing that, in those seasons when in his public capacity he was forced upon her notice, he had done anything to shock her good taste and strict sense of propriety: had his clerical deportment been tinctured with affectation, pedantry, or enthusiasm; had he but struck the pulpit-cushion too hard, or, spreading his white hand over it, have pronounced, in the softest of drawls, "My d-e-a-r brethren." But, unhappily for Esther, he was all, and more than all, she had imagined him: dignified, learned, sensible, and

judicious. She might hate, but she could not despise him.

Just six months subsequent to Mr. Goldwin's induction to the Brackenbury preferment, the newspapers gave notice to all whom it might concern, as well as to an infinite number who had no sort of interest in the matter, that his Majesty's ship *Sphynx*, bearing Admiral Freemantle's flag, had anchored at Spithead. Not very long after which announcement, the good people of Brackenbury had to mourn the absence of their beloved rector; who had left his parish for a short time, consigning it to the care of the Reverend Thomas Pickering; and, exactly a month from that period, the bells of the parish were ringing a joyful peal, and faces were seen anxiously gazing from door and window, and the servants of the rectory all in their best array with wedding top-knots, waiting to descry the approach, and welcome home their master and his bride, once the lovely Sophia Freemantle.

We should be doing grievous wrong to Miss Luttrell's strength of character, if we were to represent the event of this, her first, and, as it afterwards proved, her only love, as giving an utter deathblow to her peace of mind; but, with her prospects in life, her disposition altered materially: her character became harder and more intolerant. The inconstancy of one made her mistrustful of many; and where she would formerly have relied on outward appearances, she was now apt to suspect, and sometimes to judge harshly. There were times when she felt conscious of this unamiable tendency; but the

conviction brought no power of amendment. Too early in life she had acquired that cool circumspection which properly belongs to a much more advanced age, and the gloom which had gathered over her earthly pilgrimage affected equally her lightest tastes and the more serious pursuits in which she passed her hours.

It was considerably past the hour when Mr. Francis might have been expected home from the Hall, and his daughter was expressing her surprise at his lengthened absence, as she sat up waiting for him with her friend and companion, Mrs. Grey—an old and distant relation of the Luttrels, who had been for many years a constant resident at the Lodge. The work had been put away for the night, the slight and lady-like supper—if a few rusks and a glass of wine-and-water may bear the name of that old-fashioned, unwholesome, but most pleasant refectio—this had been duly disposed of; and the two friends, as opposite in character as they were dissimilar in age, had each taken up a book to while away the time.

Equally unlike was the theme of their studies, and the degree of attention they bestowed upon them. Miss Luttrell had long given up poetry and works of fiction: at first upon principle, lest they should awaken thoughts and emotions that had better lie dormant; and latterly because, with blighted hopes and a spirit in some sort at enmity with the world, the history of the human heart had become to her a theme profitless and unpalatable. She sat now with a volume of Mitford's Greece

before her, the perusal of which she diversified with an occasional yawn or observation. But although her remarks generally extorted some answer from her companion, Mrs. Grey followed the example of most well-bred old ladies, and, speaking when spoken to, her replies were seldom much to the purpose ; so completely was her whole attention absorbed in the novel she held in her hand. No symptoms of ennui, no fidgetings, no wearings for bed, disturbed the comfortable serenity of her wrinkled features ; as, with her cap pushed a little from her forehead, her spectacles firmly settled, and one eye half closed to soften the light, she followed the fortunes and adventures of some of her many fictitious favourites.

“ A very pretty thing this,” said she, after chiming in at hap-hazard with some remark of Esther’s ; “ an uncommonly pretty thing ! I don’t know when I have read a book that pleased me better : though I should be glad if they did not faint quite so often,” and again her attention was riveted.

Miss Luttrell looked at her with a doubtful expression, half amusement, half contempt. “ It is happy for you, ma’am,” said she, “ that you can amuse yourself so easily.”

“ It is lucky, indeed, my dear !” said the other, cheerfully ; and taking the remark in its best sense, though not perhaps quite blind to the covert scorn of the younger lady : for Mrs. Grey wanted not for penetration. “ Very lucky, indeed ! You know I am not over particular as to what I read : and a happy thing it is for me. If it were not for my being very easy in that respect, and having so little memory,

I don't know what I should do. Long before this I must have exhausted all the libraries about me : not a novel would have been left unread by me, and I should be quite aground. But as it is, you see I am not critical as to their being the very best of their kind : and then, owing to my good fortune in forgetting every book almost as soon as I have read it, the volumes come back to me over and over again, and I am very little the wiser."

"So I should think," said Miss Luttrell, drily.

"Besides," continued Mrs. Grey, "my being so slow a reader is a great advantage to me. What are you laughing at, Esther?" she asked, innocently : for Miss Luttrell, though well acquainted with the peculiarities of her old friend, could not conceal her amusement at hearing any rational creature congratulate itself on an utter deficiency in taste and judgment, and gravely set forth the great advantage of possessing neither memory nor quickness of parts.

"Nothing, ma'am," she replied ; "but you certainly have the most singular method of reconciling yourself to circumstances of anybody I ever met with."

"Oh ! is that all ?" said the other quietly. "La, my dear ! how do you think I should have got thus far through a life that was certainly none of the most prosperous, if I had been as fastidious as some people ?"

"You are right," said Esther, more seriously : "Quite right ! God knows ! it would be better for us all if we had your happy frame of mind : your constant cheerfulness, your natural philosophy, as one may well call it."

"No, don't call it any such thing: it's all constitution."

"Now, my dear Mrs. Grey, that is one of your heresies: do not let us get on that topic, or we shall quarrel before we bid good-night."

"Never mind if we do, Esther; we shall be sure to make it up again to-morrow morning."

"Well, but really, ma'am, you are not aware what that doctrine of yours may lead to. This great dependence of the mind on the functions of the body—what is it, in fact, but sheer materialism? Such a notion, seriously put forward and carried out, would involve the most momentous questions—fate, free-will, and non-resistance: indeed, you know not what you are saying."

"Nonsense, my dear!" said the old lady, laughing at the earnestness of her friend. "All you say may be very fine, Esther, and I grant you it sounds plausibly enough; but *I* judge from the experience of everyday life, while your theories are only made for Sundays. Don't you see, now, that whenever a person is poorly, he becomes cross, and turns good-humoured again only when he leaves off beef-tea and water-gruel? The stomach, depend on it, has more to do with our moral propensities than you are inclined to allow."

"I do allow it, to a certain degree; but not to the alarming and mischievous extent to which you would stretch the doctrine."

"Yes, yes," returned the other; "you allow it sometimes in theory; but never, I observe, in practice. I never yet, Esther, heard you make



allowances for anybody's misdeeds, on the score of stomach complaints ; or even toothache. Now, I say my way of judging is by far the most charitable. You, when a person behaves amiss, set him down directly as a worthless fellow, without a single grain of morality ; while I, on the contrary, only think that the poor man's liver is out of order, and that he will be a virtuous person again, as soon as ever he has taken a sufficiency of calomel."

" Ah ! now you are turning the matter into jest, Mrs. Grey : but, laugh as you may, I repeat it is a dangerous doctrine to be enlarged upon."

" Morbid secretions, Esther," the other continued : " that is a favourite phrase of mine. I heard it from old Dr. Ghrimes ; and though I don't exactly know what it means, it serves my purpose just as well as if I did. So now whenever I hear of a fellow beating his children, or murdering his wife, or something of that sort, instead of troubling myself to be angry and call him names, I merely say to myself, ' the poor creature no doubt has morbid secretions : his liver is deranged,' and it is to be hoped that the judge and jury who are to try him will have their stomachs in proper order. But the dogs are beginning to bark, so your father, I dare say, is coming to put an end to our dispute. I am sorry," the old lady continued, as she looked wistfully at her book, and turned down the page she was reading—" I am sorry I can't finish the volume before I go to bed ; the poor heroine is getting into sad trouble. That wicked old father of hers—ah ! Esther ! there it is you see : the Baron had some good points in his

character, and depend upon it if his family doctor had physicked him properly that spring, he never would have treated poor Ethelinda so cruelly ! But don't I hear a carriage coming ? I thought your father walked to the Hall to-day ?”

“So he did ; but I suppose somebody besides themselves dined there, and offered to drop him on their way home. The Fletchers, probably : though it's a good deal out of their road, and they are mighty particular about overworking their horses.”

“It can't be the Hamiltons,” said Mrs. Grey. “She'd hardly venture to keep that poor man out at this time of night ?”

“I am sure,” was the rejoinder, “I wouldn't answer for anything *she* might choose to do ;” and with such little innocent conjectures the ladies amused themselves ; never dreaming of the shock that awaited them, till it burst upon their astonished senses.

That something unusual was impending, might have been gathered from a sort of shuffling and low bustle in the vestibule ; and the room where the ladies were sitting being on the ground-floor, and the door ajar, they heard Mr. Francis give one of the servants an order to “tell Bankes,” Miss Luttrell's maid, “to make tea and send it in immediately.”

“Tea !” said Esther, looking at Mrs. Grey.

“Tea !” said her friend, returning the look.

“Oh, and Richard,” said Mr. Francis, pausing again.

“Richard !” said somebody else.

“Richard !” said a third voice. “Master wants

yöu;" and Mr. Francis made an amendment to his first order—"Richard, tell Bankes the tea must be black, not green;" and the door being now thrown wide open, the speaker entered, supporting a lady in travelling costume, and tenderly cautioning her against the effect of green tea taken late at night.

Strange, passing strange, was the nocturnal apparition! And yet it was scarcely a preparative for what was to follow, when the fair intruder was presented to them as a cousin and a Carew! To have had such an event take place in broad daylight, when the faculties are wide awake, and the ready mind may skip lightly from thought to thought—catching here a conjecture, and there a conviction; turning a stray notion topsy-turvy one moment, and setting it on its feet again the next, till all becomes clear and comprehensible—at eleven A.M., the fact would not have seemed half so incredible; but to be thus assailed with wonders at eleven at night, when eyes and intellects were drawing straws together, and the business of the day was presumed to be at an end—it was enough to frighten the lares and penates of that correct and orderly establishment from the hearth, and send the ancestral rooks and ravens cawing from their nests.

The bewildered stare with which Miss Luttrell received the shock of such an announcement, had scarcely been qualified by a very confused and lame attempt at civility, when her senses were to be again disturbed with the news of Carew's resuscitation: that very same cousin John, for whom thirteen years

ago they had all taken the trouble to put on black, and whose neat little monumental slab hung conspicuous in the parish church—was actually described to be in life and health, and ready to pay his respects to them by the earliest opportunity. No expression of surprise could now be held unmannerly or beyond the occasion: the presence of their unseasonable guest shrunk into a minor miracle; and Selby, who had felt in all its humiliating force the mute wonder of Miss Luttrell's cold inquiring eyes, and had sincerely wished herself back at the Luttrell Arms, was glad to have the general attention turned from herself. While the ladies exclaimed and asked questions, and Mr. Francis satisfied them, as well as he was able, with a second-hand report of Carew's adventures, she waited impatiently for an opening to explain the reason of her sudden intrusion; and, above everything, to make it clearly understood that she asked only one night's lodging. Before she could effect this, however, the entrance of the tea and cold meat occasioned a favourable diversion; and recalled one of the ladies, at least, to the recollection of her presence.

Mrs. Grey did the honours of the tea-table with a good-humour and quiet alacrity, which served as a pleasant relief to the frigid politeness of the mistress of the house. Who the nice old lady might be, who, though not a Luttrell, seemed to share so heartily in the family feelings, and to have as lively an interest in cousin John's revival as any of the party, his daughter could not guess; but, glad to have so accessible and indulgent a listener, Selby

lost no time in introducing her own affairs: dwelling most particularly on her anxiety to get to Stukely.

"Not for the world," thought she, "would I spend a moment longer than can be possibly avoided, under the roof which owns Miss Luttrell for a mistress." And sadly did she ask herself, "Can these be the prevailing manners of the ladies of this family? She looks at me as if I were some strange outlandish animal, whose habits and peculiarities the showman was not yet acquainted with. Would *his* mother look so at me? I think I should die if she did!" And again, while Mrs. Grey chatted on, condoling with her on her fatiguing day, and pressing her to eat—again, from the opposite side of the room, where the father and daughter were conversing—she caught that cold, grey eye fixed upon her, and felt, from the lowered tones of their colloquy, that she was become the subject of their talk and attention: and, faultless as she really was in any part of the transaction which had brought her thither, she felt herself blush like a culprit.

Had she distinguished the remark of Mr. Francis as that beautiful colour of hers rose to her cheek, and heard him recommend her to his daughter's hospitality as "one of the loveliest young creatures he had seen for an age," she might more patiently have suffered Miss Luttrell's dubious glances.

That lady presently, urged either by her father or her own sense of propriety, approached the tea-table, and the talk became more general; though of course it ran still upon the adventures of the night,

and Selby had to hear continual reference made to the people at the Hall: the Lodgites being naturally curious to know how Carew's apparition (for as such it must have seemed to them), had affected the ladies at Horton.

"Good Heavens! How amazed they must have been! What did my aunt do? And Mrs. Damer! had she words sufficient to express the full energy of her surprise?"

"Oh, it was all just as you may fancy: Isabella, a little overcome, a little hysterical at first, soon recovered herself, and sat divided between smiles and tears, while the old lady wondered and admired, scolded and laughed, by turns. Your good father, Miss Carew, was always a favourite of Mrs. Damer's;" and Mrs. Grey, with the same kind intention of gratifying the daughter, enlarged greatly on the father's good gifts. "Mr. Carew was a favourite with everybody," said she: "never were we gayer than when he was at the Hall;" and she proceeded to recount a few of the practical jokes, of which Carew, as a gay young midshipman, had been the prime instigator.

But though glad to find her father so popular in that neighbourhood, the novelty of Selby's position was yet too fresh to admit of her feeling at ease even while listening to his praises; and as soon as she could contrive to get off without absolute rudeness, she offered to retire: regretting, as she did so, that she had been unintentionally the means of deranging the family so unexpectedly, and at so unseasonable an hour.

The apology was, in all formality, tendered to Miss Luttrell, as head of the establishment ; but it was Mr. Francis, who, anticipating his daughter's colder and more cautious reply, took upon himself to answer for both of them : eloquently expatiating, as he lighted Miss Carew's night-lamp, on the delight of such a reunion, and assuring her, as he placed it in her left hand and affectionately shook the right, that her father's return would have lost half its value in their eyes if he had come to Horton unaccompanied by herself.

On returning to the parlour, after she had formally conducted the visitor to her sleeping-room, Esther found her father and Mrs. Grey still talking over the wonders of the night ; the old lady chiefly taken up with the adventures of cousin John, while Mr. Francis's attention seemed quite as much engrossed with Carew's fair daughter.

"I quite congratulate you, Esther," said he, "on the prospect of acquiring so agreeable a friend. I have, as you know, a horror of family squabbles ; and certainly our only difference could not have been made up more pleasantly than it has been this night. Poor John's reappearance is, indeed, an unhoped-for event ; and Discord herself must vanish at the sight of his charming daughter."

"She is a pretty creature, certainly," said Mrs. Grey. "Isn't she, Esther?"

Miss Luttrell's assent came slowly. "Y-e-s," said she ; "but it is rather a pity she did not wait till her company was required."

"Ah ! that's just like John : as much the creature

of generous impulse as ever! He longed—and most naturally!—to shew us this sweet girl of his, and quite overlooked the observances usual on such occasions.”

“Are you quite sure that this domestic interlude was not a preconcerted thing on both sides, to bring about the sort of intimacy with the women of this family, which *we* have always tried to avoid? I find it very difficult to believe in the child-like innocence—or ignorance, or what you will—of a full-grown woman. If she *is* a mere puppet in the hands of others, she is not worth knowing more of; and if she be not——”

“My dear Esther, how little you can understand of the character of our hair-brained, thoughtless Carew, to imagine *him* planning a premeditated scheme! Besides, why should he do so? He had no reason to suppose his daughter would be an unwelcome guest here. No; he told me, with his usual frankness, how it had all happened. He had purposed taking Miss Carew to the old clergyman’s at Stukely—a relation of her mother’s, you know—and it was not till they reached ——, and were changing coaches, that the thought struck him of bringing her on to Horton. He intended coming himself on Monday; ‘but he could not bear,’ he said, ‘turning away from us when he was on the very road:’ and he is evidently most properly anxious to have her seen and noticed by our family. To see her, indeed,” added the old gentleman, rather sentimentally, “is all that is requisite: no one can look on so sweet a face without being influenced in her favour.



It is a countenance which indicates all the finer emotions of the mind."

A slight expression of irony curled the thin lips of his daughter. "That is to say," she replied, "the young lady has a fine complexion, and you are pleased with the colour of her eyes. The acquaintance of half an hour will not allow *me* to ascertain much more than that."

"You forget, Esther," said Mr. Francis, "that my knowledge of her is of somewhat longer standing; and I saw her first under very peculiar circumstances. Poor John's thoughtless conduct—for such we must allow it to have been—had placed his daughter in a strange and delicate position; and had you seen the modest dignity with which she conducted herself, and sought to repel the imputation of having intruded herself amongst us self-invited, you would have been as much struck as I was. Imagine," and he appealed to Mrs. Grey as his most sympathizing auditor,—“imagine my surprise at finding this delicate young creature, at such a time of night, in one of the most wretched rooms of that miserable ale-house: the atmosphere almost intolerable, and a club of the most vulgar description howling their brutal songs in the very next room to her! You yourself, Esther, unromantic as you profess to be—even *you*, my love, would have been impressed as I was."

"I should have pitied *any* gentlewoman in such a situation," replied Miss Luttrell, with emphasis; "even though she had been old and ugly."

"Oh! of course," said her father, hastily. "Cer-

tainly, *that* could make no difference: though we must admit that elegance of manner is a strong presumption of inward refinement, and in this case I will venture to vouch for its being so. I shall be much mistaken if this young lady does not, on further acquaintance, display a noble magnanimity as well as the more graceful attributes of woman."

Miss Luttrell lighted her candle in silence, and then merely said,—“My expectations from strangers are never very great, and therefore stand less chance than yours of being disappointed: but, as to this young woman, you may rely on my treating her with sufficient attention; and I only hope she may not stay here long enough to put my civility to the test.”

“The fault will not be hers, if she should: her most particular wish is to continue her journey to-morrow.”

“Well, there can be no difficulty in that.”

“My dear Esther, you would not do so inhospitable a thing as to send her off in this unfriendly manner? Think how unkind it would appear to poor John. Travelling on a Sunday, too! No, no: we must make a point of her staying the day with us; and that will give her an opportunity of being properly introduced to your aunt. Jacob shall ride over to Stukely, and satisfy the Wollastons of their young friend's safety; and that, I daresay, will obviate any objection she may have to staying.”

“I daresay it will,” said Esther, drily; and so they bade good-night: but, as she parted from Mrs. Grey, at the head of the stairs, she could not forbear say-

ing, "How easily my father, like the rest of the world, is taken in by a pretty face! Had this young person been marked with the smallpox, she might have made a score of orations at the Luttrell Arms without exciting his susceptibility; and we, Mrs. Grey, should have gone to bed to-night without having heard that long word 'magnanimity' applied to her."

In the mean while, the subject of this family discussion, sat in the chamber to which her strange fate had consigned her, buried in a train of mortifying reflections. She felt that something wrong or foolish had been done, or she should not have found herself there; and feared she had compromised her husband's dignity, in allowing herself to be forced into his family in this sudden and, as he might think it, discreditable manner. To leave the neighbourhood of Horton by the first opportunity, even at the risk of being accounted abrupt and self-willed, was the only course remaining, to convince Hartley that she was acting uprightly by him, and not pretending to consult his wishes while she followed the secret bent of her own. She must resist the persuasions of even that dear uncle Francis, and be guided entirely by her own sense of prudence and propriety; and, as she repeated these resolutions again and again, she fell asleep, overcome by fatigue and continued agitation.

One word more, and we close the history of the day: literally, one word—the last which passed between Mrs. Damer and her daughter, as the former quitted Mrs. Luttrell's dressing-room, at one

o'clock in the morning, after an hour's enjoyment of that greatest of blessings to a frank nature like hers — the uncontrolled communion of a *tête-à-tête* with the person we love best, and who best understands us. She had nearly closed the door, after bidding good-night, when the remembrance of the family foreboding flashed across her : that pet prophecy which had seemed to shadow forth so solemnly the melancholy death of Carew. How slight and purposeless the incident had now become ! Opening the door again, the old lady recalled her daughter's attention with an—" I say, Isabella ;" and then, with a look and voice of extreme significance, she uttered the single word, " Jeremiah !" and went off to bed.

## CHAPTER III.

HAD Selby been bent on conciliating her cold-mannered kinswoman, she could not have hit on a surer method, than by urging her almost immediate departure from the Lodge. Esther having constrained herself to a decent display of civility, had come to Miss Carew's room to inquire how she felt after her late fatigues, and accompany her to the breakfast-table ; and her demeanour grew quite cordial as her guest dilated on the necessity of her speedy removal. Fairly relieved from the strong apprehension under which she had been labouring, that Mrs. Carew's daughter was destined to be a fixture for some days, and perhaps weeks, she now became composed in her mind and easy in her manners, and could afford a few civil expressions ; which, commonplace as they might be, would, if uttered the preceding evening, have saved her poor cousin from many a pang of mortified pride.

With a softened expression, which shewed that even the formidable Miss Luttrell could look pleasant when she chose it, she assured Selby that she would not easily gain her father's consent to any such arrangement : he was quite bent on having the

pleasure of Miss Carew's company at least till the following morning ; and accordingly, in confirmation of his daughter's words, Mr. Francis met the subject with a smiling pertinacity that boded ill for the furtherance of Selby's cherished hope.

"How," she was asked, "could he possibly sanction such a measure ? He, a magistrate, and authorize his fair guest and cousin to leave his house, and travel thirty miles on a Sunday ! Such a violation of his duty was not to be so much as contemplated : she must make up her mind to stay at the Lodge that one day, and on the next, the carriage should be at her command at any hour she was pleased to name."

Selby assured him that but, for her old friends at Stukely, she would submit at once to his authority, "and feel," she added gratefully, "most deeply flattered by having it so exerted ; but those poor, dear Wollastons"—she felt this to be her only valid plea in the eyes of the Luttrels for escaping their society, and she pressed it with confidence : "their anxiety to know what had become of her must be so great ! She really could not have a moment's comfort, while those kind, old people were in trouble on her account."

Mr. Francis, naturally supposing Miss Carew had really no other grounds for insisting on her departure, heard these excuses with a triumphant smile, that seemed in itself to say, "Now, I will remove all the scruples of my fair cousin at once ;" and so he proceeded to say, that being quite aware of the nature of her feelings with regard to those excellent

Wollastons, he had taken the liberty, while she was yet sleeping, to anticipate her wishes: he had, before eight o'clock that morning, despatched a man and horse to Stukely parsonage, with a note, written by his own hand, wherein he satisfied them of the health and safety of their expected guest; and promised that she herself would shortly, by letter or in person, enlighten them further as to the singular, but to some of her friends most agreeable, concatenation of events, which had obliged her to disappoint them the previous evening.

"The message," Mr. Francis added, "would undoubtedly have been more acceptable to your friends, had it gone directly from yourself; but knowing the removal of their anxiety to be your first consideration, I would not detain the envoy till you were ready to write. If I have done wrong, and you think me over-officious——"

"Wrong, sir!" repeated Selby, interrupting him. "Oh, you are only too good! You oppress me by so much kindness!" And in fact, her eyes were filling so fast with tears on this account, and many another unexplained, that she could not utter another word on the subject.

"Well, then, the difficulty is quite overcome," said Mr. Francis cheerfully, "and we may now sit down to breakfast, with the pleasing certainty that this day our family re-union will be complete."

Miss Luttrell and her old friend chimed in, each with a civil remark: though the sincerity of the former may be doubted; and Selby felt that the affair was indeed settled, and that, unless she re-

solved on affronting the very people whom of all others in the world it was her duty most to conciliate, there was no present egress out of the charmed circle, into the midst of which her volatile father had conjured her. An inevitable fate seemed to compass her around ; and, fearful as was the idea conveyed by that word "re-union," it could mean nothing less than a meeting with all the family at Horton. Convinced that the sentence was without appeal, she must endure the ordeal as best she might ; but she almost repented that she had not feigned illness, and kept her room, or even her bed, the whole day through : for, " Oh, what would Hartley say to it all ? "

The family party, with which Selby had already been made acquainted at the Lodge, was this morning enlarged by the addition of the two younger children, a boy and girl, of eight and ten years old ; the most uninteresting ages, perhaps, in which childhood can appear : the attractions peculiar to infancy are utterly over ; they have learned to speak plain and to be unnatural ; a shade more or less of affectation has descended on your female olive branches, and their brothers are growing pedantic. There are extraordinary exceptions to these general remarks, in instances where a fine temper and much natural sagacity is united to laxity of education ; but the young Luttrels were no examples of these nice little, ignorant people : they had their full share of the doubtful advantages of the scientific age which was then commencing.

Each hour that passed over their little heads was



apportioned to its own particular employment, and even their amusements were sedulously overlooked; for while encouraged at the allotted seasons to play and be cheerful, it was the continual boast of their kind but surely mistaken friends, that even the sports of their leisure moments were all conducted on a rational principle. To them the poetry of childhood was unknown: its dreaming fancies, its errors, absurd, but for the most part harmless, and often bringing forth more profitable musings in the end. They had no time for such things: there was continually a well-meaning somebody at hand—father, governess, or elder sister—to put right and make clear, answer every question, and pamper their self-glorification with the persuasion of possessing knowledge beyond their years.

The system, however, such as it was, appeared among the Francis Luttrels in its very best form: there was much self-approval on all sides, internal complacency and outward good behaviour; and perhaps there was not a single visitor to the Lodge who would not have cited its youthful inhabitants as amongst the best educated families in England. A deeper observer might easily have discovered the defects, which invariably arise when children perceive themselves to be made objects of paramount importance to a whole household: under an outward show of modesty, and what seemed a laudable thirst for information, there lurked a longing for praise, which no ball-room belle or her painted chaperon could feel more intensely.

In their own small family circle these results were

not so visible, but the presence of a visitor was sure to call forth their passion for display. Selby, to whom it had not as yet occurred to meet with any striking specimen of precocity, was not a little surprised when, after the morning salutations had been interchanged, and the children presented to their new cousin, she heard the young Harold address his father in a very audible voice, his eyes all the time fixed upon her, with "Papa, if you please, I must ask you a question. I should like you to tell me if the custom of toasting bread for breakfast was known to the ancients?"

"La, my dear boy!" said Mrs. Grey, before his father could reply, "what does it signify to you whether it was or not? All you have to do is to eat what's set before you, and be thankful."

A remark like this, so characteristic of the narrow-minded views of the old school, so opposed to the enlightened spirit of the new, might have met with a word of disapprobation from Miss Luttrell; had not the little girl now laid claim to public notice.

"Dear papa," said she, affectedly, stirring her tea, with her head a little on one side, "I could not sleep last night for thinking of those beautiful experiments in electricity which you were so very good as to shew us last week. How I hope, dear papa, you will have time to continue the series to-morrow: I do so anticipate it! Do not you, brother, dear?"

"Yes, sister," said the young gentleman, as solemnly as a mouthful of bread and butter would allow; "I like anything that is philosophical."

There was something so incongruous between the

size of the speaker and the tenor of his speech, that Selby, little as she was disposed for amusement, looked up with a smile, supposing everybody to be struck like herself with the boy's absurdity ; but from this error she was quickly undeceived : Mrs. Grey, indeed, warned Master Harold that long words did not accord with large mouthfuls ; but Mr. Francis informed his guest, by way of accounting for the subject started by his little girl, that he was in the habit of giving, now and then, a sort of family lecture on various scientific subjects, for the use of the children.

" Oh, yes," exclaimed the young lady, " and we enjoy them so very much ! It is so good of dear papa to take such a great deal of trouble for our instruction. Is it not, Harold, dear ? "

" Our thoughts on the all-important topic of education," said Mr. Luttrell, " have not the merit of originality : we only take credit for possessing ourselves of the best opinions of those who have studied the subject deeply, and acting on their suggestions. For instance, Esther and I are decidedly opposed to the old-fashioned system of confining the developing intellect of a child to the narrow sphere of nurseries and schoolrooms ; we desire that the young creatures should mix with their superiors in age and understanding, and be encouraged to ask such questions as may naturally arise from the flow of conversation."

It is altogether unnecessary to follow Mr. Francis in his detail of the plan of education, by which the young idea was taught to shoot, at Horton Lodge :

it was a topic of much interest with him, and having secured a new auditor, he entered upon it now with considerable minuteness.

Selby, as she listened, or seemed to listen, could not but wonder to think how misplaced had been her misgivings of the table-talk of that morning: how, with the selfishness of a lover, superadded to her narrow views of humankind, she had taken it for granted that the things and persons which engrossed her whole soul, must needs be uppermost with her companions. Yet, instead of the too interesting allusions she had feared to encounter, whenever any of the family opened their mouths, here, in the bosom of the Luttrell family, she found herself receiving hints on education; required to investigate opposing systems, and to decide impartially on the comparative merits of public and private tuition. There she sat, looking up at Mr. Francis with a pretty air of attention: which he, deluded gentleman, supposed to be given to himself and his lucid train of reasoning; while, half the time she was asking herself, "Was it for this, the fates had so strangely brought about her domestication at Horton?"

It is true, occasional references were made to the various members of the family at the "great house:" "my brother, my sister-in-law," &c., occurred in the course of conversation; but no dearer allusion was, it seemed, to electrify her nerves. Sensitive as she was about the Horton people, her pulsation could not be much quickened by hearing that Mr. Luttrell differed from his brother as to the merits of the picture which hung over the mantelpiece; or that

Mrs. Luttrell was the happy possessor of an ebony cabinet that had formerly belonged to Louis the Fourteenth; or that grandmama (for so Mrs. Damer was called in the family)—that grandmama's cockatoo had been moulting.

A cockatoo, by-the-bye, seemed to Selby the bird of all others most appropriate to Mrs. Damer: no other specimen of domestic ornithology would have been grand and important enough to have consisted with her towering conceptions of that tremendous grandmother of *his*; so as "Juno had her peacocks, and Venus her doves," Mrs. Damer must be accommodated with a feathered attribute of corresponding pretensions. The whole race of parrots and parrots would have seemed too frivolous; love-birds an anomaly; Java sparrows and the rest of the twittering tribe, a moral impossibility: but a cockatoo was the very thing for her!

"And have you any pets, my love?" she asked the little girl, who had volunteered the last piece of information.

"Oh, yes, ma'am, my sister is rearing canaries, and intends forming quite an aviary for us; so that we shall be able to study the natural history of birds from the life, and compare it with what we read concerning them: that will be *so* improving you know! Won't it, dear papa?"

"Will it not?" repeated her father, with an affectionate smile; though failing not to correct the grammatical error.

This induced an old-fashioned grumble from Mrs. Grey.

"Ha! in my time people thought nothing of saying won't, and can't, and sha'n't, and so forth; and I don't see that they got on a bit worse than their neighbours."

And hereupon Miss Luttrell expostulated.

"Surely, there can be no objection to the children speaking their own language with propriety: and why allow them to transgress the very rules they learn by rote in the schoolroom?"

"Grammar is all very well in its way, my dear; but conciseness is still better: I have no notion of giving two words to what may just as well be expressed by one."

While this matter was being canvassed *sotto voce*, Master Harold, in a louder key, was giving his opinion on certain points of natural history.

"I do not think," said he, "I should care much about birds: I like sagacious animals. You may study birds, Henrietta, but I shall have a menagerie: you know I have two rabbits of my very own already."

"Oh, but, Harold, dear, how will you ever procure wild animals to fill your menagerie? You forget, brother, that they are not natives of our soil: not indigenous." (Here was a covert look at the visitor.) "Do you not remember what dear papa told us the other day, when he was so good as to explain——?"

"Yes, sister, I know all about that as well as you do: but I am sure I can get a lion whenever I like it."

"Oh, Harold, dear!" cried his sister, affectedly

laughing; at which assumption of superior knowledge, the young philosopher, who was her junior by two years, betrayed decided symptoms of pique, grew red, and appealed to the company.

“Why might he not get a lion? Why couldn’t he write to his cousin to send him one?”

“My dear boy, how is your cousin to assist you in your zoological views?” asked Mr. Francis; who, ready as he was to find or suppose a wise reason for all the foolish remarks of his children, could not now perceive the concatenation accordingly.

But Master Harold persisted.

“Why, papa, lions come from Africa: I am sure you told me so; and Spain, you know, lies close to Africa.”

Here his sister quickly interposed.

“Oh, yes, they are only divided by the Straits of Gibraltar.”

“I was just going to say so myself, Henrietta,” said her brother, with an air of ill usage.

“And Portugal, where dear Hartley is, joins on to Spain,” she continued, still preserving the start she had gained; upon which “brother, dear” looked very much inclined to cry.

“Gently, gently! my good children,” said their father, acting as moderator, while he surveyed them with proud affection. The young gentleman, recalled to a sense of the pretty and proper, gulped down his rising emotion, and proceeded calmly:—

“And I should wish, also, to have a rhinoceros: but I should not call it a rhinoceros, I should always call it a unicorn; because I read in a book that it

is supposed to have been the unicorn of the ancients:" here he fixed a self-satisfied look at his sister, feeling a conviction that he had "floored" her decidedly. Mr. Francis then went on explaining how, as in the case of the phoenix, the pelican, &c., the fabulous and the true in natural history had become confused in course of time; but Master Harold, eager for popular applause, could not stop to listen.

"Papa, papa, I wish to ask you a question."

"Oh, Harold, love, do not, pray, interrupt dear papa when he is relating to us such very interesting things."

"Yes, sister, but I must ask him one question. Papa, were there any colonels in Julius Cæsar's army? I know very well how many cohorts a captain had; but now I should like you to tell me how many went to make a colonel?"

Mr. Francis smiled at his eldest daughter.

"Mark, Esther," said he, "the association of ideas, the steps which have led us from canary-birds to unicorns, from lions to colonels." Then addressing himself to Miss Carew, he observed, that a recent arrival of news from the Peninsula had caused the children to think and talk a good deal about their cousin Captain Luttrell: "My brother, Mr. Luttrell of Horton's only child," he added, politely explaining; "and, therefore, as you may well suppose, an object of great interest to us all. And so it is that the succession of thoughts in the human brain seems at first a tangled skein, a confusion of odds and ends; yet investigate their cause more



narrowly, and we shall find their gradation to be easy and natural. To you, for example, my dear Miss Carew, new to the inner life—if so I may call it—of our family circle, their allusions must seem idle and far-fetched; but we, aware that the children are studying the Roman history, and that their favourite cousin has just been promoted —— ”

“ Promoted ? ” said Selby, the word bursting involuntarily from her lips.

“ Yes,” said her host—with that sort of formal courtesy with which we explain to a stranger some (circumstance that though to us and our intimate friends it may be highly exciting) can be to him or her nothing more than a matter of common intelligence—“ yes, our letters of yesterday brought news of Captain Bingham’s death; the gallant officer, whose loss gives my nephew his next step in the service: we shall see his name, of course, in the next *Gazette*.”

It was well for Selby that she had already finished her breakfast, for not another morsel could she have swallowed: agitated and uncomfortable as she was. The news made no pleasant impression on her; she was rather in a humour to regard her husband’s altered style as a sort of estrangement from her: a step nearer the removal of all old landmarks; a gradual crumbling away of everything connected with that one bright season of her love,—the happy, happy days of Quin’s Folly! She cared not to be a captain’s wife: had she received the announcement from himself, it might have been otherwise; and she trusted that a letter had been forwarded, and that it

was lying even then ready for her at the parsonage—an additional reason for longing to be at Stukely. But to hear it from strange lips, and be ceremoniously informed that “Mr. Luttrell of Horton’s son had attained a step in the service!” Oh, it was bitterly humiliating: and above all things she felt herself *such* a hypocrite!

And then, though a minor grief, her gentle heart was troubled for poor Captain Bingham, whose name was very familiar to her: at least, it had been formerly, at the time when Luttrell wrote more at large, and described to her, in his spirited, clever way, all his friends and brother officers. She was sure his death must have grieved Hartley: at all events, he must be much altered, if it had not shocked him. “But, perhaps, he *was* altered: alas! there was no saying!” And thus, one sad thought pursuing another, she sat absorbed, and utterly unconscious of what was passing around her; till warned by the voice of Mrs. Grey, and, by a general and sudden movement, that the bells were ringing for church.

Here was a fresh trouble; for she had already been sadly cogitating the strong probability that the whole race of Luttrells occupied one family pew—the squire’s own pew, large, square, and exclusive: her frightened fancy had settled it all, even to the baize lining, green curtains, and brass-headed nails. Here, then, would be her first presentation to Hartley’s mother: his father, thank Fortune, was out of the way, or she felt she must in some way have evaded the meeting; but it would be bad enough without

him. Within the space of twelve feet square, or thereabouts, would she have to remain two whole hours ; exposed to critical observation, and the painful reflections engendered by sustaining such an ordeal in such a place !

It was in vain she reasoned with herself, that in the duty of the day all worldly thoughts should be laid aside : she knew that, however she might tremble elsewhere in the presence of Luttrell, yet, being once within these holy walls, no fear of any created being ought to find place within her bosom. The unhappy girl possessed not that support which can be given only by the consciousness of inward rectitude : she was clothed in the garment of deceit, and acting a falsehood every moment of her life ; how dared she, then, arrogate to herself the noble independence of one who was in all things bearing herself uprightly in the presence of God and man ?

As these things crowded upon her, her cheek became so flushed, that even the maid who was fastening her cloak (or mantle, as they were called in those days), observed it as they stood together before the glass : regarding the circumstance professionally, however, Mrs. Martin only said,—

“ I am afraid, ma'am, I drew your dress a little tight this morning : Miss Luttrell can't bear anything but what's so very easy.”

“ It will do very well,” was the answer : yet, as she spoke the words, Selby pressed her hand upon her heart, and sighed so heavily, that Martin, hazarding a second supposition, thought that perhaps a “ pin was pricking Miss Carew.” Good woman,

she little suspected that the pin was sticking in the young lady's conscience all the while.

As Mrs. Martin was leaving the room, Selby happily remembered that, on one point at least, she might satisfy herself before she rejoined the family. She inquired of her, therefore, in as careless a manner as she could assume, if the family at the Hall sat in the same pew with Mr. Francis and Miss Luttrell? And most welcome to her ears was the ready reply,—

“ Oh, dear, no, ma'am : *we* sit down stairs, but the squire's people has a gallery quite to themselves. Can I assist you further, ma'am ? ” Selby, as she answered, “ No,” felt that Mrs. Martin had assisted her in a manner she little dreamed of ; and, with this one great apprehension removed from her mind, could bring herself to put on a more cheerful aspect.

The starless night had given place to a soft and lovely morning : the sun, stealing forth from out the hazy atmosphere, with a mild but increasing lustre, and seeming, with its subdued light, to enhance still further the peculiar tranquillity of a Sunday morning. Their way to the village church of Brackenbury lay at first along a green and secluded lane, whose beauties Selby, at any other time, would have been extolling at every step ; in a little while its features were changed, thick plantations bordered it on one side, on the other the park palings, affording at intervals a peep of the great house which stood deep in the hollow below. To this object, little supposing the thrilling interest it possessed in her imagination, Mr. Francis was continually directing

the attention of his fair cousin ; criticising its position and style, and promising her a more intimate acquaintance with both its merits and defects.

Then, as they neared the church, he boasted to her of the excellent sermon she might reckon on hearing, and appealed to his daughter to confirm his warm praises of their good rector, Mr. Goldwin : whose excellence, as a clergyman, he said, could only be equalled by his irreproachable character in private life. Then he went on to enlarge upon the rector's amiability as the father of a family, and on the corresponding virtues and perfect felicity as a wife, of Mrs. Goldwin : whom he farther eulogized as being still an extremely pretty woman, wearing remarkably well for her years. And when he again referred upon the subject to Miss Luttrell, he found that she had fallen some paces in the rear ; whereupon the good man fancied he was walking too quickly for his daughter, and slackened his pace accordingly.

Assuredly, Mr. Francis was not successful just then, in his efforts to entertain the ladies. Gladly would Selby have resigned all the advantages he was promising her—the eloquent discourse, the well-trained choir, the decorum of everything appertaining to his parish church : with infinite alacrity would she have given up all, to have found herself in company with her kind old friends, the Wollastons, proceeding to the humble little church at Stukely : where, whatever might be the inward devotion of the rural congregation, its arrangements were by no means in advance of the age—where the village

singers, led by old Hobbes, the parish clerk, who had filled the office for about forty years, and accompanied by some unutterable instrument, each man sang according to his own taste and his individual opinions of tune and time—where the sermon was sure to be prosy, and twice as long as was requisite: but, with all its frailties, how welcome would poor little Stukely have been, in exchange for the unquiet thoughts that were troubling her in this more exalted sphere of action.

In the churchyard,—a beautiful spot kept with due attention to decency, but with no fulsome attempt at decoration, and from some points of which there was a fine view of the surrounding country,—Selby was in a continual tremor lest some of the well-dressed persons, whom her anxious eye distinguished as they mingled with the villagers flocking along the path-way, might prove to belong to the party from Horton: but, happily, no recognition, beyond a passing bow or curtsy, took place between them and the Francis Luttrels; and in especial the two green parasols and hats (evidently from London) which she was most afraid of overtaking before they vanished within the church porch, were simply particularized by the ladies as “those people the Hopkinses”—the idea of having one’s nerves shaken by a Hopkins!

There was, indeed, no need to conjure up imaginary terrors, when so many real causes of emotion lay around her, and met her eyes wherever she turned them. The church enclosed within its walls so many remembrances of the family in whose fortunes she was so irrevocably involved: their name and heraldic

distinctions predominated throughout the building ; the Luttrels headed each list of benefactions to their native place ; and on the faded escutcheons that drooped over her head, the well-known crest of her husband—that cognisance she dared not claim—struck her with a singular mixture of intimacy and estrangement.

Beneath her feet lay memorials of a yet more solemn character—the family vault, the resting-place of their mutual ancestors : she had noticed the inscription before the door of the pew, as with down-cast eyes she followed Mr. Francis up the aisle. It was as if some solemn influence pervaded the place, and addressed itself to her secret fears and disturbed conscience : the dead as well as the living were there, if not to upbraid, yet surely to stigmatize her as an interloper ; and as she knelt, and mechanically repeated her prayers, she could have believed that, like Faust's ill-fated Margaret, some evil thing stood behind to tempt and mock her, and draw her thoughts from heaven to earth.

The voice of the clergyman, mild yet most impressive, aided her in her struggles for composure : by degrees it brought her resignation, if not comfort ; but it was a long while before she could venture to raise her eyes to the gallery, which she supposed to be that alluded to by Mrs. Martin. The peculiar cough of her father at last attracting her notice, during a pause in the service (the congregation were just rising to sing), Selby looked up almost involuntarily, and met his eye. Carew had shaded the lower part of his face with his prayer-book, but with a slight

though significant gesture, he directed his daughter's attention to the opposite wall; and there, on an elegant little slab, were engraven these words: "Sacred to the Memory of John Carew, esq., of his Majesty's ship *Spiteful*, who perished at sea in the month of July, in the year 18—."

Selby was shocked: she more than suspected the intense levity of her father, but had not believed him so callous of heart as that he should have beheld this memorial of his escape from a fearful death without some touch of humility and thankfulness; yet here he was making actually a jest of the subject: for there was no mistaking that too expressive wink. She took excellent care from henceforth not again to look in the direction of the gallery: yet she had seen, in that one hurried glance, that her father was standing amongst a bevy of ladies; and feeling that a meeting with Hartley's mother must infallibly take place at the end of the service, she almost trembled at every fall of the preacher's deep, rich voice; lest his sermon should be coming to a close, and the greatest trial—the most important moment of her existence approaching. The earnest gaze with which her beautiful eyes were fixed upon the pulpit, escaped not the notice of Mr. Francis; though he gave to it an interpretation all his own.

"I need not ask," said he, as he discoursed afterwards on the merits of Mr. Goldwin,—“it is quite unnecessary, Miss Carew, to ask your opinion of our excellent rector: I saw how completely he engrossed your attention; how closely you followed every argument he brought to bear on his admir-



able text. Now it has sometimes struck me—I own with some surprise—that Esther is not altogether so alive to the beauties of his style; but I see at once that you and I should agree on this subject.”

But all earthly things must have an end, and so must the Rev. Henry Goldwin’s sermon. The blessing was bestowed, the last Amen was uttered, and Selby, after a fervent prayer for support and guidance, arose from her knees, to feel that the protection which that sacred place afforded her from the embarrassments of her strange position was soon to be over.

As they were leaving the church, Mr. Francis made her pause by the way to examine certain monuments, the lions of the place; which, being venerable in themselves, were doubly so in the estimation of the Luttrels, as the family could boast some affinity to the grim old warriors mouldering below. And his fair kinswoman was glad to linger on any pretence; but it was the living form of Mrs. Luttrell on which her thoughts were really fixed; and the previous presentation to her ancestors, stout and stalwart as they doubtless had been in their day, was heard, but scarcely heeded. The good knight Sir Aymer, or even Earl Richard himself, of crusading reputation—on whose special account it was that the family bore a saracen’s head amongst their emblazonments; they were neither of them mother-in-law to her, and could, therefore, be of small moment on the present occasion.

When she and her party had left the church, there seemed a tacit agreement amongst them to loiter. Miss Luttrell entered into talk with an old

woman in a duffle cloak, while her father courteously entertained an old lady in a silk one; and thus they were standing, when forth from a small side door leading up to the gallery-pew, came the party from Horton.

The sight of her father, who walked "foremost of the company," sufficiently informed Selby that what she most dreaded was close at hand. With a countenance, whose bland respect touched nearly the confines of veneration, Carew was giving his attention to the lady who leaned upon his arm. It was an elderly, majestic figure, whom Selby rightly concluded to be Mrs. Luttrell's mother, and her anxious heart began to beat still faster; but from the notice of this lady she had at present nothing to apprehend. Carew, indeed, intimating the vicinity of his daughter, would willingly have presented her immediately; but Mrs. Damer merely observed, "phoo, phoo! that will do as well some other time," and then—her obsequious conductor, accommodating his own step to her firm, undeviating foot-fall—they passed along in earnest discourse, down the long avenue from whence the lodge party had diverged, without taking any notice of them.

It was, in fact, the first opportunity which had occurred to Mrs. Damer, since cousin John's unexpected reappearance, for speaking to him privately and without reserve: and happy was it for Selby that the discussion, or lecture, or whatever it might be called, with which the old lady was holding forth, was never destined to reach *her* ears; for scarcely had Mrs. Damer passed the first yew-tree, than that

broad embarrassing question, which thirteen years before had sounded so often in *his*, was again emphatically repeated: in fact, had the ghost of Carew, instead of his mortal body, come back to Mrs. Damer, we are thoroughly convinced it would have been her first form of exorcism.

"But now, John, in the name of all that is mysterious and unaccountable, what could induce you to marry that woman? (alas! how many a John in this world might with far more reason be thus addressed!) It has been the ruin of all your prospects: I told you so at the time, and I repeat it again; you have been a ruined man ever since you suffered yourself to be decoyed into that unhappy connection."

"Decoyed!" the word was a lucky one for Carew, who might otherwise have been in doubt how best to excuse the false step she adverted to. The bullying style he ventured not with her, the heroic or the sentimental she would alike despise; at once, therefore, he adopted the hint she had afforded him, and became penitent and plausible. Without attempting a word in defence of the wife whom, when in her presence, he professed to idolize, he acknowledged with expressions of remorse, and even exaggerated the folly Mrs. Damer charged upon him. And then dexterously playing on her well-known prejudices, he tried to lay on other shoulders the burthen of his own misdeeds.

"For remember, my dear madam," said he,—"remember how I was indulged in my childhood! Don't suppose I intend to reproach the memory of my poor mother" (he knew how heartily

the "dowager Carew," as he had been wont to call her, was always detested by Mrs. Damer), "I am sincerely convinced she acted towards me with the very best intentions, poor soul! But if ever an idle young dog was suffered to run wild with impunity I was that child."

Just as he had foreseen, his energetic companion chimed in, "You may well say that! most justly, indeed! Good Heavens, John, how have I literally shuddered at the way in which she brought you up!"

"I know you did, my dear madam; and when it was too late I could appreciate all the kindness and wisdom of your remonstrances. Ah, Mrs. Damer, what a different fate might have been mine, if your counsels had had more weight with my poor dear mother!"

"Why, as for that, John," said Mrs. Damer, not quite satisfied with the tone he was taking, "the fault might not lie altogether with your mother—there is something in natural disposition."

"Yes," returned Carew, significantly, and warding off the old lady's side-blow with admirable skill: "Yes, and there is also *something* in having had a grandmother."

"Don't name her to me!" cried Mrs. Damer, vehemently; "that woman was always my abhorrence! If there was one being on earth more vain, weak, and mischievous, than all humanity put together, it was your grandmother Carew. Yes, John, you are perfectly right: with a person like *that* to mislead your childhood, pervert every proper feeling, and foster all that was bad in you, it was a

moral impossibility that you should turn out a respectable man. I give you my word, cousin, when I have thought upon these things, my only wonder has been that you had not finished your career long since, by an ignominious death."

At the risk of spoiling his game completely, Carew could not forbear remarking, demurely—"How very glad you must have been, then, when you heard that I was drowned!" And seeing that the old lady's sense of humour caused her to receive the joke without a positive frown, he warned her against being premature in her congratulations on a point of this delicate nature; reminding her that a miraculous escape from a watery death was not usually reckoned to ensure a respectable termination to a gentleman's career in life.

"Well," said she, half laughing, "if you do come to be hanged, John; for the sake of your family I beg but one favour, and that is, that you'll change your name first, and let it be done decently under an *alias*. But Heaven forgive me for indulging you in your flightiness! at my time of life I ought to know better. Ah, John, John, that silly levity of yours corrupts not only yourself, but the very companions that are advising you, and trying to make a silken purse out of——"

"Spare me the end of the saying, my dear madam; though I fear I have often deserved it."

They had by this time reached Mrs. Damer's pony-chaise, which was waiting for her at the churchyard gate; and Carew, as he carefully handed her into it, resumed the decorum of face and manner which he had suffered himself for a moment to forget.

"You are right, my dear Mrs. Damer," said he, "quite right! The vivacity of my disposition has always been my worst enemy."

"Thoughtlessness, John: call it by its right name."

"Call it what you will; but be assured, my dear madam, of one thing"—here he spoke with great apparent feeling—"that whatever may have been the follies of my head, my heart has never failed to acknowledge most warmly the kind sympathy and affection which has invariably been shewn me by yourself and your dear family."

He pressed her hand as he finished this little speech, and then respectfully raised it to his lips: an indulgent smile played over those of his old friend.

"Well, well, John," said she, "it may be as you say: but now go and hasten Isabella, for it will agree better with her to drive home with me than walk with the others; and desire her not to make me wait."

Delighted to receive his *congé*, and yet go off with flying colours, Carew received his directions with a look serious, yet gratified; backed a few steps with his hat in his hand, and then replacing it, skipped along the churchyard; lauding his own admirable management of grandmothers, living and dead, and humming something which, though the day was Sunday, sounded marvellously like the "Bay of Biscay O." Then bounding lightly over a grave or two, he cut across to the spot where all the Luttrell party were gathered together. Yes, they were all there! The meeting, the presentation so unutterably alarming to his daughter, had already taken place; and when Carew made up to them, he found her

conversing with Mrs. Luttrell—not, indeed, with her accustomed composure, for she looked flushed and confused : but her long estrangement from her father's relations, and the manner in which she had been thrust upon their notice seemed naturally to account for this ; and in the eyes of Mrs. Luttrell, the bashfulness of her young kinswoman was far from being unbecoming.

The strong prejudice which this lady, in common with the rest of her family, had long ago imbibed against Carew's wife, had considerably influenced her preconceptions of his daughter ; and, despite cousin John's glowing description of his "sweet Selby," Mrs. Luttrell was prepared to find her—a handsome girl, perhaps—but with a tinge of boldness ; a something of the maternal insolence : in short, a total absence of that good breeding which such a mother must be incapable of imparting, and which the mere advantages of complexion or feature could little atone for. She was, therefore, no less surprised than pleased, to perceive in her young relation a person of perfect gentility, in manner as well as countenance ; and to find that, so far from the forward assumption she had expected, her new acquaintance seemed only too diffident and retiring : she was evidently so very properly—so deeply impressed with the honour of Mrs. Luttrell's notice. In truth, a person of colder and more suspicious temperament—her niece Esther, for example—might have been excused for questioning Miss Carew's sincerity, and esteeming her manners rather more timid and humble than the occasion demanded.

But Mrs. Luttrell was of a kind and affectionate nature; ready, if possible, to be satisfied with all the world, and only acted upon by the stronger prejudices of those about her, to put an evil construction where a charitable one would have sufficed: she only, in this downcast hesitating address, saw that cousin John's daughter, besides being very pretty, was also a modest, well-behaved young person, whom "the family" would have no cause to be ashamed of; and every moment, by confirming this favourable opinion, increased the cordiality of her own address.

It would surely be a superfluous waste of words were we to enlarge upon the exquisite delight of poor Selby, when she found herself thus greeted—she who, in her solitary musings, had so often pictured the cold looks and haughty indifference of Hartley's mother, and even in her most sanguine moments had anticipated an introduction to her with the greatest alarm.

The mere sight of Mrs. Luttrell was sufficient to dispel Selby's fear; for though she was elegant even to refinement, her address was easy and natural: she was still eminently handsome, and looked so young that she might well have passed for the eldest daughter of the house, instead of its mistress. In the sweetest manner possible she congratulated Selby on her father's restoration to his family; alluding, as she did so, to some adventures of his, which (as usual) his daughter had never heard of till that instant: and unlike—oh, how immeasurably unlike—the reluctant courtesies of her niece, not even the sensitive person she was addressing could gather from her



manner the slightest indication that this new cousin was looked upon as an intruder.

Selby longed to meet this flattering reception in the same frank spirit in which it was tendered; but that, in the present discomposed state of her nerves, was quite impossible. There needed not words, however, to express the nature of her feelings, or render her more attractive: the lovely character of her face, the winning softness of her voice and utterance, in the little she did say during this colloquy among the graves—such natural graces as these were more than enough to supply the place of set speeches.

And this, be it further observed, was exactly the opinion of the gentleman on whose arm Mrs. Luttrell had been leaning as she left the church; and who continued with her all the while she was paying her compliments to Miss Carew. He was a young man of fine figure and countenance, a sort of person not easily to be overlooked in a country churchyard; and his looks of admiration at Selby, as, standing somewhat aloof, he remained intently regarding her, were so evident and so profound, that they could hardly have failed attracting her notice, had she not been entirely engrossed by Mrs. Luttrell.

This want of perception on the daughter's part, however, was fully compensated by the father's clearness of vision: he saw and understood at a glance how matters were situated. Even as Carew skipped over the last little green mound, which covered the remains of Peter Prescott and Mary Susannah his beloved wife, he had made his observations; and was chuckling internally over his own

admirable tactics, in having brought his beautiful girl into a new and extensive sphere for the display of her charms.

Cousin John's first care on rejoining the others, was to receive and acknowledge with sufficient warmth the salutations of the ladies from the Lodge; and though Miss Luttrell was so altered, that in any other place he would have passed her as a stranger, he ended his cousinly greeting by protesting he had never in all his life seen any one so unchanged by years.

"Upon my soul, Esther," said he, "neither you nor Mrs. Grey look an hour older than when I left you, I won't say how many years ago: but the fact is, every one here strikes me as looking younger than ever. Here's Isabella, now: who that sees her, with that fine bloom and youthful air, would believe she was the mother of a great, tall fellow like Hartley—or Captain Luttrell, as we must learn to call him now? I hear him constantly spoken of as one of the finest young men in the service. Major Davison was mentioning him to me but the other day: Davison of the — you know, Selby."

Selby did *not* know Davison, and would rather not have been referred to.

"And what did Major Davison say about Hartley?" inquired Mrs. Luttrell, ever awake to the slightest mention of her son. "I think he could not have known him personally, because that regiment has not been in the Peninsula."

"No, to be sure it has not," rejoined Carew

readily. "He was speaking of a friend of his who had been acquainted with Captain Luttrell."

"Oh, don't call him so; it sounds to me so cold and ceremonious."

"Yes, it is a serious trial to a mother's feelings certainly," said Esther, in her somewhat sarcastic manner: "the promotion of a son must be a heavy shock."

"Well, but really, Esther——"

"Nay, nay, Isabella," said Mr. Francis, laughing, "if you cannot hear the first step, how will you stand it, when you hear him some day called General Luttrell?"

"Oh, by that time, I shall be too old and deaf to hear anything. But you have not told me yet, John, what Major Davison's friend had been saying about Hartley."

"Praised him up to the skies, my dear cousin: it was most gratifying to my feelings to hear him so mentioned."

"And you are sure you can't remember the name of the officer?"

"I am afraid I can't recall it immediately—Johnson—Thomson. What the deuce was the man's name, Selby? you heard the conversation, my love."

"No, indeed, sir," said she, starting.

"Ah, well, it does not signify just now.—What is your man running for at such a rate? Oh, God bless me! I entirely forgot my commission: there is Mrs. Damer waiting for you to drive home with her, Isabella?"

"You don't say so. I thought Lady Gascoigne or Mrs. Marsham had gone with her: how could I be so forgetful?" Then reminding the Lodge party that they were all to dine at the Hall that day, she shook hands with Selby, said something more about this "delightful reunion," and bidding the servant run back and assure his mistress she was coming, Mrs. Luttrell followed immediately.

"Only think," she said, as she took the arm of Selby's observer. "Only think of my forgetting mama so entirely?"

"Do you call that strange?" said he; "for my part, I only wonder you did not forget every relation you had upon earth. I should, in your situation."

And so they hurried down the path, leaving Selby in a flutter of happiness, such as she had not experienced for months: ay, not for years before.

It was something so new to her to be feeling light of heart, and indulging in hopeful speculation—so strange that any pleasurable emotion should be connecting her with the Luttrells, that it is no wonder if she fancied herself walking in a dream, and sometimes doubted the reality of all that was passing.

Little did Mrs. Luttrell imagine that the simple courtesies she had just been paying—and which, though sincere enough in their expression, she regarded as matters of course—should have been the means of raising a fellow-mortal from no ordinary despondency to joy and contentment: and yet the few kind words she had uttered had done all this; and Selby, with the buoyancy of youth, easily depressed yet soon elated, read in her mother-in-law's

prompt attention and sweet expression of face, an earnest, not only of present favour, but of future kindness and affection.

She no longer dreaded her husband's disapprobation of her conduct in venturing to Horton without consulting him : after being so graciously welcomed by his mother, it was impossible Hartley *could* object to the step she had taken in his absence. On the contrary, it seemed to her that he must be pleased and gratified most sensibly, when he found the first trying interview to be over, and understood that she was established in the favour of all his relations—all with the exception of Miss Luttrell : but Esther's cold manners, even if they were intended to wound, had now no power to do so. She felt herself quite safe, and raised high above all the minor annoyances which had before affrighted and subdued her. The very freaks of her father found favour in her sight, and began to assume the character of harmless eccentricities ; for she began to think he might not, after all, have erred in bringing her into so amiable a circle : so many friends willing to be kind and courteous to her.

It will be perceived from all this, that poor Selby, in the unusual elation of her spirits, was a little disposed to overrate her present gleam of prosperity ; and to regard everything, past, present, and to come, in the bright but flickering sunlight of her newly-awakened hopes. If, up to this time, Mr. Francis and Mrs. Grey had considered Miss Carew agreeable, they thought her now quite charming. Her smile was no longer languid, or her speech con-

strained : she moved with a light step and a beaming countenance ; and when, as they returned along the lane, Mr. Francis resumed the *ciceroni*, and again drew her attention to Horton Hall, she stopped boldly to look at it just as long as he chose, and only blushed a little the brighter, and marvelled the more, to find herself in so strange—so *very* strange—a position. Instead of dreading her approaching visit to that house, she trusted, when there, to complete the favourable impression she had already made. “Such a delightful reunion!” the expression had only alarmed her when Mr. Francis had made use of it ; but, coming from the lips of the mistress of Horton, what could be more encouraging, or convey a kinder meaning ?

Perhaps it was well for our heroine that she had but little opportunity for self-communing, or there is no saying what visions of future bliss her sudden glimpse of good fortune might not have engendered. A visitor or two called at the Lodge between the morning and afternoon services ; and, however ill-disposed for commonplace chat, she could hardly, without rudeness, absent herself from the drawing-room. After all, some feeling peculiar to the place and its environs, arose continually to throw a sort of importance over every trifling subject which was started ; and the bald, disjointed gossip, which in any other neighbourhood would have seemed utterly insipid, was interesting to her now : introducing, as it frequently did, some notices of the family or the visitors at the Hall.

“This new cousin of ours,” said Miss Luttrell, as

she afterwards communicated with her faithful old confidante, Mrs. Grey—"this Miss Carew has the true Bath taste. It is evident she doats upon company, and cares not of what elements it is composed, provided she may sit and display her pretty face and well-made gown. She seemed just as well pleased to hear those two tiresome old women, the Crumptions, utter a parcel of fulsome compliments about Hartley's promotion and my uncle's wonderful influence with the ministry, as if they had really been saying anything worth listening to. I now know exactly what to think of her."

These strictures were whispered as they all walked in the garden, after the departure of their visitors.

Esther, whose blighted affections had settled much upon her greenhouse, looked on the progress of spring, its buds and its blossoms, with the satisfied yet scientific air of a botanist; while Selby, with a heart relieved from much of the iron weight that had oppressed it during the winter, felt every breath she drew to be a positive pleasure; and, in the thankfulness of her soul, believed the sunshine had really an influence over her spirits.

Mr. Francis did the honours of the place to his lovely cousin with great satisfaction. The children, usually his foremost care, seemed a secondary consideration. Twice did Miss Henrietta exclaim, "Dear papa, will you have the goodness to repeat to us what you said concerning the ramifications of the acorn having analogy to the branches of the oak—I think that was what you told us, dear papa—was it not?" The question passed unheeded; while

Master Harold remarked on the nature and growth of "funguses," as he persisted in calling them, till corrected by his sister,—"*Fungi*, dearest Harold; it is derived from the Latin, you know, brother dear." In vain was their learning displayed: their remarks reached not so much as one of the paternal ears; both being engrossed by the sweet voice and intelligent observations of Miss Carew.

Away then went Henrietta in pursuit of a butterfly, with a hundred affected contortions and glances over her shoulder, to see if any one was admiring her movements.

"No, sister," said the little boy, pedantically, when she urged him to play with her: "you know we can chase butterflies when we are alone; but I prefer now to stay with papa, because he always teaches us something new: and I do not think there is any instruction to be gained by running after butterflies."

"Oh, yes, brother! we always love to be with dear papa."

Mr. Francis, as his children pressed up to claim his attention, smiled upon them with all the benignity of a good papa in a moral story-book: but it was a smile of abstraction, nevertheless; and, on a repetition of the words "ramification" and "funguses," he strongly advised them to run about, for the good of their health. He had been slightly complaining, though still in a laudable spirit of resignation, about the limited extent of his pleasure grounds; and yet it was some time before they had strolled as far as their boundary. Here in one spot



the shrubbery bordered close upon the public path ; which, however, as it did not lead directly to any high road, was little frequented except on market days. As they stood loitering here, a carriage was heard approaching ; and the little girl, running up, called out,—“ Here is dear Mrs. Hamilton, and her beautiful little ponies.”

“ *He* must be better, then, to-day,” observed Esther : “ I fancied so when I saw her at church.”

And while she was speaking a pony-chaise made its appearance in the lane, driven by an elegant young woman, whose brilliant complexion was strikingly and sadly contrasted with that of the gentleman sitting by her side. He, pale and emaciated, seemed to be suffering premature decay, and shewed all the symptoms of hopeless consumption.

He was reclining back in the carriage, but, as soon as he perceived the party from the Lodge, raised himself, with a smile and look of pleasure. Mr. Francis, then, unlocking the little gate that gave access to the road, went to the other side of the carriage to talk to the invalid ; and compliments passed between the ladies. On the part of Mrs. Hamilton, they were uttered in a tone of languor and dissatisfaction, which were at once suited to the melancholy state of one whose dying husband sat beside her, and harmonized admirably with the voluptuous caste of her beauty. Selby was particularly struck with this lady’s rich deep-toned voice, as she answered the inquiries after her husband.

“ Oh ! he is *so* ill !” said she. “ *Such* a night as

I have had ! I don't think I closed my eyes for ten minutes together—it is dreadful !”

“Indeed, it must be a severe trial for you both,” said Miss Luttrell ; “but I trust you may, in the end, be rewarded for all your cares by seeing Mr. Hamilton's gradual recovery. You think him a shade better—do you not ?”

“Who—I ? Oh, no ! Far, *very* far from it ! Have you observed him much lately ?” She lowered her voice, though her husband was too much engrossed with Mr. Francis to hear what was said. “Have you remarked his looks ? They are frightfully altered ! Oh, no ! I cannot flatter myself. I see but too plainly how it must end ; and it is that clear-sightedness to the truth that makes my situation so painful : I am sure I wish I could deceive myself.”

Mrs. Grey took up the office of comforter, which Esther seemed well contented to resign to her.

“Oh ! you must not despond in this way,” said she, in her cheerful manner ; “I have seen many and many a worse-looking subject than Mr. Hamilton pick up amazingly during the summer. You know, we have now, it is to be hoped, a long spell of fine weather before us—weather which may do him a world of good, I do assure you : I don't say it to flatter you”—and the old lady turned her eyes rather oddly upon Miss Luttrell as she spoke—“but it would not surprise me the least in the world if he were to see us all out yet ; and so I told him the last time we met.”

“Yes, I know you did,” said the lady, leaning list-

lessly over the side of the phaeton, and switching the flies off her impatient ponies.

"And very kind it was of you to try to keep up his spirits : but you cannot expect me, watching him so constantly as I do, and perfectly awake to all the fatal symptoms of his disease—you can't suppose me so easily deceived."

"My dear Mrs. Hamilton, in such a case as this, I should be the last person on earth to attempt deceiving you, or anybody. But I have seen a great deal of illness in my time, especially complaints like these ; and really the wonderful recoveries that have happened under my own observation——"

"Yes, of course, *wonderful* recoveries ;" and Mrs. Hamilton raised her fine large eyes to her zealous comforter, with something that seemed almost like reproach. "Everybody, no doubt, has seen *them* ; but who can rationally hope for a *wonderful* recovery ? That would be expecting a miracle to be wrought in our favour at once ; and I assure you I don't think myself good enough, by any means, for an interposition of that sort."

"No, my dear," was the reply, given with ready but civil composure ; "but, perhaps, Mr. Hamilton is. No, no, depend on it, his case is not by a great deal so desperate as your over-anxious affection"—again a slight emphasis—"leads you to suppose."

"My dear Mrs. Grey," said the invalid, now turning round, and speaking in the faint sickly voice which, coming from manly lips, seems equally

unnatural and distressing, "I hope you and Miss Luttrell are persuading this dear creature to take more care of herself. Her constant attention to me is killing her."

"Oh, no fear of that," said Mrs. Grey, comfortably smiling upon him: "not the least fear of that. You may be quite certain, Mr. Hamilton, that no woman yet was ever the worse for doing her duty by her husband."

"Oh, of course not: that is quite an established fact," said Mrs. Hamilton, as she arose from her half-reclining position, and prepared to move on. "The *wife*" (petulantly) "is never to be considered—*her* anxieties and fatigue are always to be made light of, and taken as a thing of course." Then changing her tone to one of indifference, "I believe you dine at the Hall to-day, and we shall probably look in in the course of the evening, if Edward continues well enough, so we need only say good-bye for the present," and bowing with a constrained smile, and heightened colour, she drove off.

Hereupon ensued a species of by-play between the Lodge ladies, enigmatical to Selby, but apparently amusing to themselves. Looking triumphantly after the carriage, Mrs. Grey began,—

"Haven't I sent her off in a fine humour! I pity the ponies, that's all. They'll suffer for my kind consolations, or I should wonder: but they are fat enough to bear it."

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Luttrell, joining in the old lady's little chuckling laugh with more natural

glee than Selby had thought her capable of displaying, "I must say you are as good a hand at comforting a distressed wife as it is possible to imagine."

These remarks were apparently unheard by Mr. Francis, who was standing rather apart: *his* little apostrophe was of a very opposite character.

"Charming woman!" said he, as the fair charioteer disappeared in the distance; and then re-entering the shrubbery and fastening the gate after the ladies, he resumed his former station by the side of Selby. His daughter said nothing to this note of admiration, and the reply of Mrs. Grey was, in point of length and breadth, nearly equivalent to the silence of her friend: she merely said, "Humph!"

"Ah!" said Mr. Francis, smiling, "I am aware we differ a little on this point; but I flatter myself I have gained a powerful ally, who will make me equal to you at least in numbers. I shall be much mistaken," turning gallantly to Selby, "if Miss Carew does not agree with me as to our fair neighbour's perfections, quite as well as in other matters of taste."

"I don't know, sir," said Selby, smiling: "men and women may agree very well in their opinions of things in general, and yet differ essentially when the human form or character come under discussion."

"And am I really to understand by that, that you do not admire the lady we have just been speaking to?"

"Oh, I think her as handsome a woman as I ever beheld: of course I cannot, in so short an

acquaintance, attempt to form an opinion on points of more importance."

The ladies smiled at each other.

"But you give her credit for being an excellent wife," pursued Mr. Luttrell. "You saw yourself what care she was taking of her poor sick husband. I assure you she is always the same: the most anxious, devoted nurse!"

"Mr. Hamilton is happy in having such a companion, and she most blessed in being able to give him comfort."

"He is, indeed," said Mr. Francis: "allow me to extricate your cloak, the branch has caught it."

Here the ladies looked at each other, and the word "Blenkinsop" was distinctly, though in a whisper, exchanged between them—"And so grateful is the invalid," continued Mr. Francis, "so thoroughly persuaded of his good fortune, that that alone is a proof, if any were wanting, of her being all that a wife should be. But that smile of yours, Miss Carew, charming as it is, has an air of scepticism. Ah! I see how it is; my ladies there have infected you: with that expressive eye, you must never attempt to dissimulate."

"I assure you, sir, if I happen to see more of Mrs. Hamilton, I will be sincerity itself, and tell you just what I think of her: at present, all I can say is, that she has a very striking air, and a very sweet way of complaining of the trouble her husband gives her; and that, in spite of his cough keeping her awake all night, she looks very blooming this morn-

ing, and quite equal to the management of him, poor man ! and her pretty little ponies besides."

The ladies laughed, and Mr. Francis, gaily shrugging his shoulders, said,—“ This, then, is all the praise you can afford our handsome friend ;” and he thought, as he spoke, how hard it was for one pretty woman to do justice to the merits of another.

“ You see, sir,” said his daughter, “ we are not the only persons who think Mrs. Hamilton not quite perfection.”

“ I see,” said he, “ (excuse me, another impertinent bramble), that you are all very censorious ; and till very strong evidence to the contrary arises, I shall still hold her unexceptionable : yes, wholly impeccable, from that bewitching little bow on her bonnet to the extremest tip of her slender little finger. Can more be said ? Can chivalry itself go further in defence of calumniated beauty ?”

“ Yes, one little step more,” said Selby, in the same strain ; “ the lash at the end of her whip. However, sir, though you are in such a fearful minority, we must give you due credit for defending the cause of the absent : that always *sounds* well, at all events.”

“ Ah, well,” said he, “ I must go to the Rectory for allies : *there* our fair friend is properly appreciated.”

“ No doubt of it,” said his daughter, bitterly : “ her handsome face will secure her favour in that house, whatever she may be. Beauty is like charity in this world of ours, it covers a multitude of sins.

Henrietta, this path is not broad enough for three ; go to your brother."

"Yes, dear sister ; but I love so to hear you talk."

"We know you do, my dear," said Mrs. Grey, cutting the matter short ; "but little people have no business to listen to what does not concern them."



## CHAPTER IV.

THAT day, as Selby was dressing for her visit to the Hall, Miss Luttrell's maxim came into her head; and she repeated to herself more than once, "Beauty, like charity, covers a multitude of sins. Alas! if I have any to boast of, I fear there is one transgression of mine which would seem so heavy in the sight of the Luttrells, that no mortal charms would ever excuse it." Yet still the events of the day had been of so encouraging a nature, that she could not give way to despondency. If disappointment was at hand, why, she must do her best to bear it; but, for a few hours at least, she would shut her eyes to everything but the present moment, and be happy.

It was a singular coincidence that the toilette of Mr. Francis Luttrell had also on that day been finished with more than ordinary care; and it did not escape the notice of his daughter and her old friend, that he wore for the first time a coat which, when it arrived from London some weeks before, he had condemned as too juvenile in make and colour to suit his time of life. In spite of the

remonstrances of Mrs. Grey, who was certain it would prove particularly becoming, this specimen of the latest fashion had been laid aside.

It seemed now, however, that Mr. Francis had sacrificed his own opinion to that of Mrs. Grey. Happy the man that is open to conviction! Perhaps the beauty of the day tempted him to assume a gayer style than usual : bright blue might be considered more appropriate to the season than his winter costume of olive brown; or perhaps he wore it now because it was Sunday, or in sheer absence of mind, or entirely to please Mrs. Grey. At all events, we must not waste time upon the subject now; for behold there stands Mr. Francis at this moment, with a smile of affectionate urbanity, and his arm gracefully presented, waiting to lead Miss Carew to the carriage which was to convey the party to Horton.

In the course of the drive, Selby might have acquainted herself with many particulars as to the people she was about to mix with, the names of the friends who were staying at the house, the term of their visit, and so forth; but the flutter of her spirits prevented her giving much attention to what was said. She was, it must be owned, seeking Horton Hall under very different auspices from those which frowned over her first approach to it; yet she could not find herself travelling that road again without many a powerful sensation.

Once, when, turning from her own thoughts and the prospect abroad, she forced herself to pay a civil regard to her companions; she heard them talking

about a marriage, shortly, it seemed, to take place amongst some connections of theirs; and then she listened with less effort. I know not whether she was guided by her original disposition, or that she was influenced by certain events in her own career; but true it is, that when many another subject failed to interest her, she would listen with a thoughtful brow, and eyes of tender sympathy, whenever the word "wedding" was pronounced in her hearing. On this occasion, therefore, though the couple in question were unknown to her by name, and not even related in so much as the fifteenth degree with any Luttrell or Carew, she listened with some attention.

The bride-elect was a Miss Drake, a wealthy heiress, whose father had been a very particular friend of the elder Mr. Luttrell, and had associated him with the young lady's aunt, Lady Sarah Wigram, as guardian and trustee of her property; on account of which circumstances, the event of her approaching marriage was regarded by the Horton family with particular interest: the gentleman's name was Romilly. Selby started; for well did she recognise the name, and required not to be told that he had served in Portugal with Captain Luttrell, and been a personal friend of his. His uncle, Colonel Widdrington, having taken some pique against the officers of the —, had left the service himself, and insisted upon his nephew selling out of the corps to which he had hitherto been attached. For a year past, therefore, though hoping ultimately to resume his profession, he had been an

idler upon the town : as far, that is to say, as the word *idler* is consistent with the habits of any gentleman who advances his worldly prospects by paying his addresses to an heiress. Captain Romilly was further described as an accomplished and very fine young man.

"But you have seen him already," said Miss Luttrell.

Selby had but a faint recollection of the bridegroom elect; but was ready to take especial interest in any one who had been a friend of Hartley's, and quite longed to see more of him: and oh, if he would but talk of that dear friend!

"Well," said Mrs. Grey, interrupting an account of his descent and good qualities, "I took it into my head somehow, that Sophia Drake and your cousin would have come together at last: it was just now one of the things I had marked out in my own mind as likely to happen."

"What, Hartley?" said Miss Luttrell. "Oh, no! Oh, *dear*, no! Miss Drake is a nice girl enough, and in point of connection the thing might not have been amiss; but, after all, she is not the sort of woman for Hartley. Oh, no! she wouldn't do for him: nobody would have felt gratified with such a match."

"Oh," replied the other, "I don't mean to say that the captain might not do a great deal better for himself, in the way of matrimony; I only mean that the intimacy with her and her aunt, and the way they were likely to be thrown together continually, made the sort of thing appear not unnatural."

Esther could not agree with her friend ; and Mr. Francis observed,—

“ Miss Drake is by no means a disagreeable young woman, and does not want for understanding ; but, judging of Hartley from what he was when he left England, I should say she had hardly beauty enough to attract him.”

How Selby's heart beat while this dialogue was passing ! The eye of Mr. Francis rested admiringly on her, as he added, “ We Luttrels are certainly a little particular on that point.”

“ Ah, well ! ” said Mrs. Grey, winding up the subject just as the carriage rolled through the heavy gates of Horton Hall.—“ Ah, well ! I only hope the captain may never do a worse thing than marry Sophy Drake, that's all.” And Miss Luttrell, with something between a sigh and a groan, “ hoped and trusted he might not ! ”

Selby looked inquiringly at the speakers, but nothing more was said ; and a moment's consideration shewed her that such remarks might be fairly applied to any young man exposed to the temptations of the world. Mrs. Grey was an old stager in the ways of society, whilst her friend evidently leaned to the dark side of everything.

And now Selby stood within the precincts of Horton Hall, and surveyed, under the influence of sunshine, that (to her) most interesting place ; which, in the material and mental darkness of the previous night, had looked so awful—so unapproachable. Even now she could scarcely shake off the feeling that she was treading on forbidden ground ; and still

the old thought would haunt her,—“What would Hartley say, if he could see me here?”

Horton Hall, though very imposing from its size and solidity, could boast but little beauty of architecture. It had been built in the reign of Queen Anne, and had all the stiffness of style peculiar to that period. Long flights of steps, with heavy balustrades and ornamental urns perched in all directions; these were instances not to be mistaken of the taste—presumed to be classical, but really Dutch—which predominated amongst the country-seats erected during the Augustan age, as it has been called, of England.

“Now, Miss Carew,” said Esther, as she stepped from the carriage, “you are going to be introduced to the ugliest house in all the county.”

But Selby could not subscribe to this condemnation. The Hall was sacred to her: endeared by many a secret, fond association. It was the birth-place of him she doated on, the scene of his infancy and boyhood; and, with her eyes fixed on the splendid façade of red brick and stone work which stretched its length before her, more like a palace than the residence of a private gentleman, she warmly repelled her cousin’s censure.

“Oh, no, Miss Luttrell, I cannot think so: *I* never can call it ugly.”

“If,” said Mr. Francis, smiling on his young friend, “if we had not lately differed so widely, I might have entertained some hope of a coincidence of sentiment here. Mrs. Damer and myself, Miss Carew, are, I believe, the only persons in the family who do jus-

tice to this old house. But to me it would appear a species of ingratitude, to depreciate a building which reminds me, whenever I see it, of some of our finest writers—which breathes the spirit of Pope, and Swift, and Addison. Does it not strike you so?" he inquired, giving Selby his arm, yet stopping to examine the exterior of the mansion ere they entered it.

"Indeed, sir," she answered, her countenance bright with intelligence, "it seems to me to carry us back to the very age of the *Spectator*. Sir Roger de Coverley himself, might have stood on this very spot."

Mr. Francis was delighted to find his opinions so participated, and by so pretty a woman. "That is the true historical spirit," said he: "but I had no fear that we should not understand each other. I felt convinced of the truly classical perception of Miss Carew: that taste so rarely to be met with, especially amongst women; but which is allied to whatever is high and noble in sentiment. It charms me to find how much our feelings are in unison."

"Feelings!" repeated Mrs. Grey, in a whisper, to Esther.

"With so fair an advocate on my side," continued Mr. Francis, "I shall maintain the cause of Horton Hall with renewed spirit."

"Oh, sir! let people say what they please of it: they cannot appreciate our feelings."

"More feelings," said Esther, returning her friend's whisper; and then, relapsing into a quiet melancholy smile, she remarked, "Heaven knows, I have no wish to depreciate the old place: many of my young-

est, and therefore happiest, days have been passed within its walls, and it will always be dear enough to me."

They were about to enter the house, when the old butler, addressing Miss Luttrell, said,—

"My mistress and the ladies, ma'am, are in the garden; shall I inform them of your being here? or will it be agreeable to you to follow them into the grounds? They are only in the upper garden."

"We will go to them, Baxter, if Miss Carew has no objection."

Objection! what objection could she have to anything which should serve to acquaint her with the localities of Horton Hall? Besides, Selby's nerves were in a condition that seemed to require fresh air: it was not entirely hope, nor fear; exultation, or the workings of curiosity; but a mingling together of all these feelings, and many more besides, which led her to hate the being fixed to one spot. She would have preferred a lonelier ramble, with no civil companion, to disturb the tenor of her thoughts; but as none of the rings on her slender fingers possessed the gift of invisibility, she must rest contented with mortal aid: the ready escort, that is to say, of uncle Francis, and proceed in a less unsociable fashion.

They were ushered to what was called the upper garden, by old Baxter; who, notwithstanding Miss Luttrell's assurances that they could find their way without him, would persist in marshalling them along the broad gravel-walks and green alleys.

"You might as well talk to a post, Esther," said Mrs. Grey: "I should as soon think of contradict-



ing Mrs. Damer herself as venture to dispute with Baxter."

"Is the old man deaf, then?" asked Selby.

"By no means, he is only obstinate: but it serves the purpose quite as well."

"And that," said her father, "we may call a deafness of the intellect, may we not?"

"You may call it what you will," said Esther; "but it is equally annoying, under whatever name it goes. He is often so tiresome, and bent on having his own way, Miss Carew, that I really believe, if it were not for the picturesque, he would have been pensioned off long ago; but his old-fashioned figure suits so well with these stiff walks and antiquated ornaments, that they would almost as soon think of cutting down the yew-trees at the end of the terrace as deprive the prospect of old Baxter. I remember my cousin Hartley—Captain Luttrell," she added as a note of explanation—"used to say he was sure Baxter had been alive ever since the time of Horace Walpole; and that, if his memory served him, he might give us a hundred anecdotes, worth all the collections of letters that have come to light for the last century, and that it was only his intense obstinacy that prevented him."

"Did he—did he say so?" cried Selby. "Oh, what a good idea!"

A cold glance from Miss Luttrell brought her to her senses; and turning away her blushing face, she sought to change the subject.

A turn at the end of the terrace brought them in sight of those they were seeking, who were loitering

about the brink of a large stone basin, a reservoir for gold and silver fish, which, with its appropriate accompaniment of a slender jet d'eau, embellished that part of the garden. It was a gay looking group; for, the spring being particularly mild, they were all in their dinner dresses, unencumbered with any of those useful but uncouth defences against sun and wind, which ladies fair call "garden bonnets." Some of the visitors at the Hall having gone that morning to a church a few miles distant, there were one or two whom Selby had not even seen before; and as she descended the steps of the terrace, she wondered who amongst them she was to regard as relations.

The group, who were watching or feeding the fish, as the beautiful things sported and clustered to the edge of the basin, consisted of Mrs. Luttrell, Fanny Marsham, a young cousin of hers, Sir William and Lady Gascoigne, and Captain Romilly; whom we trust our readers have recognised as an old acquaintance. He, having obtained leave of absence from his somewhat exacting fiancée, Miss Drake, had run down for a couple of days to Horton Hall, to carry the news of Hartley's promotion, and congratulate Mrs. Luttrell on that agreeable event. And here we may observe, that much esteem and even confidence subsisted between him and that lady: his having been the intimate friend of her beloved son would, in fact, have recommended him at once to her partial opinion; but, besides this, the young officer was distinguished by a warmth of heart and an enthusiasm of expression, which accorded well with

her own more subdued, but not perhaps colder character.

As for the Gascoignes, Sir William was a good-looking, middle-aged man; his wife an elegant little woman, who would have been decidedly pretty, but for an expression of face which some people called "pensive," and others "cross." Considering the marked difference of age existing between the husband and wife, Selby may be pardoned, if, early in her acquaintance with them, she assigned that as the cause of Lady Gascoigne's discontented looks. The marriage, she thought, had probably been a union of mere convenience on the part of the lady; and her lively imagination even went the length of suspecting a prior attachment to some favoured individual, whose years were more in accordance with those of her ladyship.

But nothing could be farther from the truth than this little romance. Lady Gascoigne, instead of sighing for some youthful lover, slim, sentimental, and gawky, doated on Sir William with all her heart; and it was this very love that caused her peevishness. They were equals in every respect, except in the reckoning of those few years; which, if she could cheerfully overlook, the world might surely pardon. They were each well-born and wealthy, with two lovely children in their nursery, full of health and glee; and yet, with all these appliances to domestic bliss, Lady Gascoigne was not a happy woman. She was disturbed by jealousy, not of the living, but, strange to say it, of the dead: of those who had been sleeping in their quiet graves while she was a girl

at school. She was Sir William's third wife, and in spite of his real and evident attachment to her, she had somehow taken it into her pretty little head, that he still cherished the memory of the former Ladies Gascoigne, and held their successor exceedingly cheap in comparison with them.

Never did he look grave in her presence, but she fancied him comparing her to one or other, or perhaps to *both* of his first wives; and Othello himself never looked much blacker than did her poor little ladyship whenever Sir William made but the smallest allusion to either of the "dears departed": the words, trifling as they might be, would ring in her ears long afterwards, as proof undeniable that his affections were buried in their graves.

Carew, whom his daughter naturally looked for amongst the company, she did not for a little while perceive; but anon observed him in another division of the garden, escorting Mrs. Damer to rest herself in a summer-house, which terminated the view in that direction. Cousin John, well satisfied from pleasant experience of the liberal spirit of the old lady—liberal, we mean, in the pecuniary, *not* political meaning of the word—had his own reasons for sticking very close to her; and now he was modulating his tone to hers, and adapting his sentiments and step so as to suit at once her prejudices and her corns: all being done in his most finished style.

Nor was this the sole exemplification of the spirit of selfishness—that great principle of all evil—having crept into this calm, luxurious, old-fashioned garden of Eden.

In a pleached alley, which branched off in an opposite direction, was another pair; a lady and gentleman, moving also arm-in-arm: she a stout, rather handsome person of "a certain age," vigorous alike in mind and body; he a man of sixty-four or five, of a ruddy aspect, it is true, and capacious proportions, but who, having far less decision in his step and manner, might occasionally have faltered, had it not been for the bold pace and upright bearing of his companion. She was Mrs. Marsham, cousin to the Luttrels, and mother to the young thing from boarding-school—half child, yet too much of the woman—who was amusing itself with feeding the fish, and talking nonsense to Captain Romilly.

At the moment of which we are now treating, Mrs. Marsham, who had a strong turn for petty scheming, was prosecuting a favourite design—and a most determined one it was—upon the very fat and pink-faced old gentleman, whose constitutional walk she had volunteered to accompany. Be it briefly specified, however, that her views were not upon his heart; although he was a rich and childless widower, and she a widow of some years standing: nor even, just then, on the final event of his will. Her aim, at present, went no further than the procuring a temporary home at his expence—an admittance into his town-house for the next month or six weeks, for herself and her daughter Fanny: the latter having been, to her vast content, elected one of Miss Drake's bridesmaids, was, consequently, under a positive necessity of repairing shortly to London, where the Marshams had no fixed abode, to procure wedding

finery in the first place, and also for a due discharge of her important functions about the person of the bride elect.

But Mr. Fothergill, cousin though he was, was known to be shy of giving invitations, and therefore the management of this affair called for a double portion of that tact on which Mrs. Marsham prided herself. She had been domesticated with him for three whole days, and had not yet compassed her point, nor had ever been able to satisfy herself as to the cause of his backwardness: whether it was the apprehension of trouble or expense, or that he had the fear of his housekeeper before his eyes, or was swayed by all these motives at once, she could not by any means devise; all she felt thoroughly persuaded of, amounted to this one fact—that if she suffered him to escape out of this delicious green alley before he had come to the point, and proffered that bed, board, and lodging, on which, to save hotel expenses, she had set her heart—the case might be regarded henceforth as hopeless.

There is reason to believe that the old gentleman himself had arrived at much the same conclusion; for he, too, was not destitute of a certain small tact in the minor matters of this world, and “my cousin Marsham’s” designs had not (shrewd as she thought herself) been so artfully masked, but that he had very soon penetrated their drift. Odd as it may seem, however, the clearsightedness of her antagonist rather increased than diminished her chance of ultimate success. To a more delicate negotiator, Mr. Fothergill might have turned an apparently deaf ear, but there

was no possibility of misunderstanding the very broad hints and inuendoes of "my cousin;" and the very conviction that she was quite resolved to carry her point, persuaded him that that point would to a dead certainty be carried, let him be as reluctant as he might. For well was he acquainted with the power of female influence: for five-and-thirty years had Mr. Fothergill personally acquiesced under the despotic control of one of the most resolute of wives, and though she had been removed from the head of his table and the superintendence of his affairs—from the dictation of his political opinions and the tying of his cravat; yet death, while it had removed his wife, had spared his housekeeper; and Mrs. Marsham was not far from the truth, in guessing that, under the iron rule of the correct Mrs. Hoskins, her worthy relation was scarcely more of a free agent than he had been in the lifetime of his wife. In transactions with his fellow-men—the creatures of thew and sinew, felt and broadcloth—the old gentleman could often maintain a respectable degree of obstinacy in the assertion of his own will; inso-much that the epithets "mulish" and "pig-headed" had more than once in his day been applied to him: and yet, such is the force of habit, he would shrink at the soft tones of a female voice, and cower at the very rustle of a silk petticoat.

Up to this present period, however, matters remain undecided; and he has, with a sort of awkward dexterity, not a little alarming to the lady, contrived to evade or stave off the subject so interesting to her. He has even signified a wish to

return to the company, trusting—innocent and hen-pecked that he is!—to find safety in numbers: but then comes the ready rejoinder of his overpowering cousin; and she backs her negative with high authority: for “Didn’t our dear good Mrs. Fothergill always recommend a short walk before dinner?” And unable to deny either the fact or its inference, he feels the leading-strings tightening round his portly person, and as they reached the end of the green alley, throws one wistful glance, one timid sigh, beyond; and then, resigning himself to the Fates (for *they* were feminine also!) and the buxom Marsham, suffers them to trot him backwards and forwards even as they will.

Undecided we have pronounced the question, yet who can doubt its event? Who can doubt that when Mrs. Marsham allows her venerable relative to rejoin the family, her face will be radiant with triumph at having gained her point, while his will be subdued and uncomfortable? She will be musing on her skill in having secured a carriage at command, with nice little dinners and all the snug et ceteras, which she appreciates to the utmost, but loves not to pay for; and he, revolving a host of troubles and misarrangements, almost unknown in his bachelor-like establishment; the whole terminating in the awful vision of a sulky, or it might even be an infuriated Hoskins.

Selby was soothed and gratified, and every lingering apprehension laid at rest by Mrs. Luttrell’s reception of her. “Her personal appearance,” she thought, “must, at least, be approved of, or she



could not be so very kind, and almost affectionate in her manner."

"We have been finding a world of fault with you all, good people," said Mr. Francis. "You none of you assimilate with the landscape. Miss Carew, whose taste is perfect, except in one trifling instance"—and the old gentleman smiled at his fair cousin with an air of arch intelligence—"Miss Carew gives it as her decided opinion that old Baxter, considered as an object of the picturesque, is worth your whole group put together."

"What a heavy accusation!" said Mrs. Luttrell. "Miss Carew, too!" and she kindly pressed Selby's hand. "Our new cousin and friend to be so severe a critic!"

"And pray what may be required of us?" said Sir William Gascoigne. "Is this young lady pastorally disposed? Are we to adopt the pipe and the crook to complete her beau ideal of the picture? No one," he added, "can doubt *her* finding a suitable Corydon whenever she chooses to play the part of Phyllis or Chloe; only we must hear what is expected of us."

"You mistake the thing entirely," said Mr. Francis; "if Miss Carew loses her heart in these Dutch-built gardens, it will only be to some gentleman in a powdered wig and lace ruffles. She declared positively against all modern innovations the moment she set foot within the gates of Horton."

"Who would not wish, then, to walk in the likeness of his great-grandfather?" exclaimed Captain

Romilly, with a look of admiration not to be misinterpreted. "Is it possible that nothing less than a laced waistcoat can find favour in your eyes?"

Selby laughed, and disclaimed, "Unless I adopted hoop and lappets myself, I should have no right to dictate."

"Oh! as to that," said Fanny Marsham, looking over her shoulder as she still kneeled at the brink of the pond, "I am sure if anything of that sort were to fall in my way, I wouldn't be particular about dress."

"Anything of which sort, Fanny?"

"My dear Lady Gascoigne," said young Romilly, "what an unnecessary question is that! Does Fanny ever think or dream but of one subject?—of course, she means a man and a lover."

"Of course, I do," said Miss Marsham, composedly. "I am sure, if I were lucky enough to meet with such a thing, I wouldn't quarrel with his waistcoat—would I, mama? Oh! mama's not here. He should wear just what he liked; only supposing he let me choose the buttons for him: I am *very* particular about the buttons."

"Ha!" murmured Mrs. Grey, glancing obliquely at those of Mr. Francis Luttrell, which were rather conspicuous in the rays of a declining sun.

"Take care, Fanny; take care," said Captain Romilly: "Make sure of your waistcoat, and the heart underneath it too, before you stipulate about those buttons."

"Captain Romilly, I desire you will not presume to call me by my Christian name: it might do very

well half a year ago, when I was learning dreadful lessons at horrid Miss Crump's odious school; but if I am reckoned old enough to be your bridesmaid——"

"Phoo!" said he.

"No; it isn't phoo!" said she; "for it's a proof that I am old enough to be a person of consequence; and I'll trouble you to treat me with respect."

The company in general laughed at Fanny, who, as the youngest amongst them, seemed licensed to talk as fast and foolishly as she pleased; but it seemed as if Captain Romilly was not, on this occasion, quite so indulgent to her, for her words called up an obvious shade of vexation to his generally open brow. There had been times and seasons before now, when his approaching marriage was an irksome theme to him; but the feeling had never pressed so strongly on him as upon that day: inwardly denouncing all forward school-girls, he was himself almost surprised at the extreme inclination that seized him to overturn the fair Fanny into the fish-pond.

"Oh!" cried the young thing, pursuing the idea nearest her heart, "I should so like to go to a wedding every week of my life! it must be so charming!—the white gloves, and the favours, and the flirting, and the dear little three-cornered bits of cake. Oh, mama"—for that specimen of maternal respectability was now at hand, coming jauntily forth from her "woodbine coverture"—"oh, mama! wouldn't it be nice?"

"Yes, my own precious! to be sure it would,"

she replied, perfectly ignorant of what her daughter was saying ; then stooping to her ear, under pretence of kissing her, she murmured, in a sort of crowing whisper, "It's all right, Fanny : I have got the invitation." And having imparted this most important piece of news, Mrs. Marsham turned briskly round to greet the new arrival, Miss Carew ; claiming relationship with her in such a frank, pleasant manner, that Selby saw at once she was to be no exception to the general amiability of her new-found cousins.

A far more important ceremony then ensued ; for Miss Carew was presently conducted to the summer-house, and presented particularly to Mrs. Damer. But even this introduction did not prove half so alarming as Selby had anticipated : a certain air of stateliness there certainly was about Mrs. Luttrell's mother ; but perhaps it amounted to little more than the repose so highly consistent with Mrs. Damer's time of life. At all events, it was a style that sat gracefully upon her, and accorded as well with her fine features and distinguished height, as the sweeter smile and gentler voice of Mrs. Luttrell suited her more feminine countenance.

The almost inevitable stiffness attending this introduction of "the widow Carew's" daughter, was greatly obviated by the presence and intervention of Carew. Selby thought she had never seen her father to more advantage than here amongst his relations. Without relinquishing the gentlemanly ease and cheerfulness which rendered him so generally popular, his sallies of gaiety were so judi-

ciously tempered to the composed gentility of the place; his air of deference towards Mrs. Damer was so proper; his attentions to her daughter were so gracefully adapted to their former affectionate intimacy, that he never once recalled to Selby's remembrance the boyish, reckless being who had been her travelling companion to Horton. It was no slight pleasure to have him restored to her respect and filial esteem, and to feel that he added to the many soothing concomitants that were now consoling her for her past trials. It was as if, on that one happy day, no mortification from outward circumstances was to ruffle the easy flowing of the hours.

While thus conversing with her new friends, and trying to trace in the features of Hartley's mother and grandmother some likeness of their beloved descendant, Selby forgot her desire to ramble further, and was almost sorry when the dinner-bell summoned them in-doors.

As they returned to the house, Mrs. Luttrell drew Selby's arm within her own, and expressed her great regret that Mr. Luttrell's absence from home should have occurred just then: the regret, we need hardly say, was *not* mutual. Miss Carew had an instinctive awe of the head of that house: she was morally certain that things would not be going on so agreeably if he had been at home; but something must be said in reply, so she inquired if Mr. Luttrell had been long in town?

"Some people would not call it long," Mrs. Luttrell replied, "but the slightest absence from those I love always seems long to me. And I cannot, at

times, help fearing there may be more in this lengthened stay than he or anybody will confess to me. If he should have heard any news that would be likely to harass and alarm me, it would account for his remaining in town. The House is not expected to meet again just yet; and as for Miss Drake's business, which is the chief excuse for his being in London, I cannot believe but that the lawyers might go on without his constant superintendence. The fact is, Miss Carew," she proceeded, "they laugh at my fears; and perhaps sometimes with a little reason, for I know I am morbidly sensitive; but when the creature most dear to us is in a foreign land, engaged in the most perilous of all human occupations, it seems to me only strange that we are able to distract our thoughts from dwelling on the subject incessantly. There are times when I wonder at myself for appearing cheerful for a moment, considering what misery may (unknown to me) be hanging over my head!"

Selby, unacquainted with her mother-in-law's peculiarities, heard her with painful attention; and, though unequal to any direct mention of the subject of her anxiety, she ventured to ask if there were really any grounds for apprehension?

Now, the fact was, that she need not have been so very guarded in her inquiries, or have feared expressing too deep a solicitude; for to Mrs. Luttrell it seemed the most natural thing in the world, that everybody should be interested in the fate and welfare of her son; and as her nervous alarms were discouraged to the utmost by her immediate kindred—

even her kind and courteous brother-in-law sometimes turning a deaf ear to the maternal fidgets—it was no wonder if she was pleased to find a ready auditor: and, on the present occasion, one too who, judging by the tender expression of her countenance, appeared likely to enter into her desponding views, and not be too consolatory. Such a friend would be, indeed, a blessing !

In answer to Selby's earnest question, she could not but own that, just at present, there seemed no actual cause for alarm—"but, even while we are speaking," said she, "who knows what scenes of horror may not be acting: how many fond parents made childless and sorrowful for life!" Then, pressing Selby's arm still closer, Mrs. Luttrell fervently added, "Oh, my dear Miss Carew! if you wish to preserve your peace of mind in this world, never trust your happiness to the vicissitudes of a soldier's career!"

Selby, except by returning her kindly squeeze of the arm, could make no reply to this sudden effusion: not perceiving, in the egotism of her own feelings, that Mrs. Luttrell was simply indulging hers, she could only think to herself, "What a subject, of all others, had the mother of Hartley Luttrell chosen to enter upon with her!" Could there be a more singular fatality than to be thus warned by such a person, and in such a place.

They joined the others, and, happily for Selby's tranquillity, the *tête-à-tête* was interrupted.

"You are aware, I suppose," said Miss Luttrell, addressing her aunt, as she walked on the other side

of her,—“you are aware that you are to be favoured with the company of the Hamiltons this evening?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Mrs. Luttrell, speaking with rather less than her customary sweetness,—“yes, that is an almost daily occurrence: but, perhaps, I ought not to complain; society is such an amusement to him, poor man!”

“And of course it is entirely on *his* account that she gives you so much of her time,” said Esther, in her dry peculiar manner; “and purely for the good of his lungs that she brings him out into the night air!”

A pause ensued, and then Mrs. Luttrell said, in a lower voice,—“God knows, her visits are anything but gratifying to me!”

“I understand they have taken the cottage at Green Hollow,” said Esther.

“Yes, we could not avoid letting them have it—a most improper situation for a consumptive person: but he was so taken with the place that he would not hear reason.”

“Ay, prompted by her, of course.”

“Oh, yes, that was evident enough; though she pretended to have had no hand in the matter. Poor fellow! he will not live many months to enjoy that, or any other home!” and Mrs. Luttrell sighed, with peculiar heaviness, as she thus signed, as it might be, Mr. Hamilton’s death-warrant.

“Mrs. Grey thinks otherwise,” said Miss Luttrell: “she does not think his case quite so desperate; and you know she has had some experience of this complaint.”

“Heaven grant she may be right!” exclaimed the



other : " his life would be indeed a blessing, and remove a weight from my mind ; which, I assure you, Esther, is at times almost intolerable to me."

" I trust you take the matter more seriously than there is any occasion for," said Esther. Her aunt only shook her head in reply, and they entered the house.

As they had fallen a little in rear of the others while thus conversing, and as both ladies had clear, though not loud voices, the greatest part of what they were saying was heard by Selby ; and she could not help wondering how these Hamiltons were connected with the Horton people, and what was the peculiar sort of interest which the ladies of the family seemed to attach to them. It was but the thought of the moment ; for what were the poor invalid and his handsome wife to her ? Self, self reigned all predominant, as she found herself beneath the roof-tree of Horton Hall, and thought how differently she would have felt, had she been resting on the arm of her husband, the object of his open love and tender attention. As it was, though gratified by the kindness shewn her in that house, she felt almost as much oppressed by it as pleased ; for was she not, in some sense, imposing on Mrs. Luttrell and all the family ? meanly creeping into their favour under false colours ? To a mind that, but for the pressure of circumstances, would have been openness and truth itself, the idea was utterly revolting ; and she moved towards the dinner-room, through that splendid hall, with eyes that sought the earth, and a spirit sinking again into despondency.

Mr. Francis, chained to the arm of Mrs. Marsham, and doomed to hear of nothing but Mr. Fothergill and the town-house, regretted that he could not be by the side of Miss Carew on this her first introduction to the mansion of his brother ; the good points of which he longed to point out to her. Nor was he the only gentleman there who coveted the same place : Captain Romilly, engaged man though he was (and was known to be), would gladly have been Selby's special conductor ; and was only consoled by finding that, though separated from her at dinner, he was able to sit exactly opposite to her ; and, by judiciously choosing his opportunity, might gaze upwards of an hour and a half on a face which, besides its manifest beauty, struck and interested him more than he could quite account for.

For her restoration to a more tranquil state of mind, Selby could not have been better placed than by the side of Sir William Gascoigne ; as he, not being a Luttrell, or even a far-off cousin of the name, was more likely to talk upon subjects wholly indifferent to her. On her left hand was a Mr. Mauleverer, a gentleman who had joined them as they were entering the house ; he was a tall, dark-browed, swarthy man, with a countenance more intelligent than pleasing ; and she presently gathered from what was said, that he was brother to Mrs. Hamilton : a circumstance she could never have surmised from his appearance.

Now it happened, oddly enough, as Selby afterwards thought, that the only considerable shock her nerves received during the period of dinner, arose

from this same beetle-browed stranger ; and it confirmed a favourite theory of hers, that first impressions may always be relied on. While the more solid business of eating was proceeding, and the conversation kept to subjects of common interest, he merely seemed to his fair neighbour a rather disagreeable, clever sort of man, whose turn for a cold sort of sarcasm would better have become the bar than the pulpit : for from his being specially requested to say grace, she perceived he must be a clergyman. But after the cloth had been removed a little while, the word *Saragossa* struck upon her ear, and she could no longer listen to Sir William's account of the last York festival, and Braham's wonderful enunciation of " Deeper and deeper still ! " When she was able to give her attention elsewhere, Fanny Marsham's girlish voice was taking the lead.

" Oh ! but do tell me, Captain Romilly ; for I am sure Spain is a delightful place, if half what one hears about it is true : and now tell me, are the ladies not all very beautiful ? and wear veils, don't they ? and have great big, dark eyes and moustachios—no, no, I don't mean moustachios—I mean mantillas : yes, I know they do, so picturesque ! and balconies ! Oh, mama ! and serenades every night of their lives ! And is it true that all the husbands are sure to be jealous ? And young cavaliers, so nice, with long cloaks and boleros, and drooping feathers, and bull-fights, and guitars. Oh, mama, how I should like to go to Spain ! It would be so nice ! "

"Should you, my darling? But how should I ever part from you, my own child? Thank you, Mr. Carew; yes, I will trouble you for a little of the sauce."

"There, now! that's just like mama! Whenever I think she is going to be quite pathetic, she'll turn round and ask for gravy. But as for that nice Spain, it must be so like a novel!"

"Ah, Fanny!" said Mrs. Luttrell, "if you had been where Captain Romilly has, you would have found your pleasant dreams melt into sad realities!"

"Not entirely, perhaps," said Romilly; "I should have got on but badly, if I had seen things only as they really existed. You, Mrs. Luttrell, are the last person in the world to think that poetry, and all those feelings that raise humanity above the brutes, is confined to books; it mixes with the very commonest events of life: the very air we breathe, though it brings but fog to some people, carries with it inspiration to others; and deprived of this illusion, if such we must call it, the dull routine of everyday life would become a burthen too heavy to be borne."

"Admirable doctrine!" said Mr. Mauleverer, with an evident sneer; "equally rational and virtuous!"

It was not the first time that he had contradicted young Romilly within the last hour; but he spoke in a murmur, and the remark passed unnoticed.

"We can easily suppose," said Miss Luttrell, "that *your* fancy is lively enough to create a world

of its own; but what becomes of those poor fellows who may not happen to be endowed with all Captain Romilly's enthusiasm? How must the ordinary privations of a soldier's life appear to them?"

"Possibly," said Mr. Mauleverer, "they may be contented to do their duty in an upright, manly spirit, without being blinded by the fumes of a disordered intellect."

"Or stomach, Esther," Mrs. Grey chimed in.

Captain Romilly took no direct notice of Selby's reverend neighbour; he merely fell into a playful tirade against the "dull dogs" Miss Luttrell was alluding to,—“clods of the valley, who never knew the delight of dreaming with their eyes open.” “It matters little what they think or what becomes of them; they are equally *de trop* wherever they may happen to be; except in their proper position, bartering their pigs in a country market: unless we adopt Falstaff's recommendation, and call them ‘food for powder;’ and that is but sorry praise after all.”

“Oh, don't talk in that way, Captain Romilly,” cried Mrs. Luttrell, shuddering.

He laughed.

“I beg your pardon, ma'am,” said he; “I forgot you objected to the words powder and ball. In fact, I know of no expressions within the range of military terms that does *not* affect your nerves.”

“Oh, I confess it: I am weak to the last degree!”

“You are, indeed, Isabella,” said Mrs. Damer.

“Yes,” replied her daughter; “I acknowledge the

truth of your reproach. Many of the words which occur in ordinary discourse excite in my mind the most awful and distressing images. Nobody can imagine," and she turned to Selby, "what I have often endured, not from any malicious purpose in others to give me pain, but simply from the commonest topics of conversation—the idle gossip of the day."

"I can believe it, perfectly," said Selby.

"Yes," said Romilly; "and knowing all this, imagine my position last night, when on one side of me sat Mrs. Hamilton, eager to talk over old stories, and urging, prompting me to go over all my adventures—or rather," he added, correcting himself with a slight smile, "the exploits of the — Dragoons; for I have not the vanity to presume that my poor achievements were her chief objects of interest."

Here Mr. Mauleverer took up the word.

"Perhaps, if they had been," said he drily, "you might have entertained her with less reluctance."

"Very possibly I might," returned the other carelessly. "Vanity is a ruling passion, and I don't pretend to be more free from it than my neighbours. It is a fascinating amusement that, speaking in the first person singular; especially when such a pair of eyes as your sister's are riveted on us all the while."

Selby fancied, as he said this, that she heard Mr. Mauleverer mutter the word "Puppy" between his teeth.

"But to go on with my story," said the young

officer : " there, on my right hand, was Mrs. Hamilton, her countenance glowing at every fresh anecdote ; while on my left sat Mrs. Luttrell, sighing and shivering, and looking as if she were going to faint, if I did but make the artillery roar in the distance."

Everybody laughed at this, except Mr. Mauleverer.

" The real state of the case is this," said Carew, " circumstances have conspired against her ; but it is quite evident that Nature never intended Isabella to be the mother of a hero."

While this sort of talk was being carried on by the table in general, Mr. Mauleverer remarked, sarcastically, " I apprehend there is no occasion to be *dreadfully* alarmed on that score." The observation—for it was uttered in a subdued voice—might have arisen from some passing ebullition of ill-temper, meant, for the gentleman's individual gratification rather than the public ear ; but, nevertheless, it distinctly reached that of the fair Carew ; and there was something so offensive in the tone in which it was uttered, that, surprised out of her usual caution, she turned upon him suddenly, and said, though in the same suppressed voice,—

" I have always understood my cousin, Captain Luttrell, to be an officer of very high reputation, and one whom the breath of slander has never yet presumed to touch."

She felt her face glow as she spoke ; and Mauleverer, unprepared to find his sarcasm so sharply rebutted, and see a female antagonist bristling by

his side, was really confounded, and anxious to explain.

“You quite misunderstand me, madam,” said he; “I have, I assure you, a proper respect for Captain Luttrell’s character in the army: he is well spoken of, and has done, I believe, some very gallant things. But when we talk about a hero, *that*, you must be aware, ma’am, implies a degree of merit—a sort of *éclat* which it does not fall to the lot of many men to obtain. Doubtless”—and here he again assumed that particular tone so offensive to Selby—“doubtless, Captain Luttrell would prove himself a military star of the first magnitude—another Marlborough, a second Wellington—always supposing that circumstances allowed of the due development of his talents. But if he have *not* this good fortune—if he simply remain doing his ordinary duty as captain of a company of dragoons—why, we can only say that the chances of the service have been unfavourable to him—that is all. However,”—and here he laughed, with an open sneer—“we must not bear *too* hard upon the eulogiums of near relations. In every family we find these harmless calculations upon the future fame of its rising members: a very innocent diversion it is. I have seen many a bishop that was to be, trundling a hoop, and lord chancellors in pinafores; so it would be hardly fair if such a respectable race as this might not reckon on a commander-in-chief, or a field-marshal at the least, amongst their martial descendants. Allow me to fill your glass.”

Selby could hardly command herself to decline



the offer with decent forbearance, so annoyed was she to find herself in such close conjunction, and apparent fellowship, with one who was actually depreciating her husband, and treating the natural—oh, how natural!—partiality of his sweet mother and her friends with civil mockery. She had expected excitement upon hearing Hartley's name pronounced in that house, but not of this sort.

Of course, he meant nothing by what he said : he would hardly sit as a guest at that board, and seriously slander the heir and hope of the Luttrels ; he was only a disagreeable, snarling, impertinent man, wholly unfit, she was sure, for the profession into which he had so presumptuously thrust himself. This was all : but it was enough to make her desirous to escape from his vicinity, and the opportunity occurred sooner than she had expected ; for just as the conversation was growing more general, and proceeding at a more animated rate, a footman came up to Mrs. Luttrell, and spoke a few words in her ear. The light laugh with which she was listening to some anecdote of cousin John's, immediately subsided into that half peevish look, which seemed so opposite to the usual sweet expression of her face ; and when she gave the ladies their signal to retire from the table, she accounted for withdrawing so soon by mentioning that Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had arrived. Selby could readily suppose that the sister of Mr. Mauleverer might be a very irksome guest.

As the ladies ascended the noble staircase, in their way to the drawing-room, Miss Luttrell observed the

curiosity with which Selby was surveying everything around her, and asked her if she would like to see more of the house.

"There are a few good paintings in the gallery," said she; "though I am afraid the daylight will hardly serve to display them properly. But, at all events," lowering her voice, "we shall escape the after-dinner talk of a parcel of women—and that is *such* a relief."

"Happy you, who *can* escape!" said Mrs. Luttrell, in the same key. "I would gladly accompany you; for I should like to shew one or two things myself to Miss Carew. Only I hope," she added, with a confiding kindness that struck Selby with a pang of remorse, "that I shall have frequent opportunities—and that of weeks, not hours—for making her acquainted with Horton. But now," with a sigh and a shrug, "the good folks in the drawing-room must, I suppose, be attended to."

It was, therefore, only the trio from the Lodge that set forth to what were called the "state rooms." Selby, who had never heard a description of Horton Hall, had formed no idea of its magnificence: whatever fault might be found with the exterior of the place, all within was finely proportioned, and the ornaments were of a stately and massive character, which carried with it a something awful to her easily excited fancy; and full of odd feelings—half pleasure, half pride, a little tremulous sort of exultation, some self-reproach, and a great deal of fear—Selby moved after her two guides in a dreamy state; which they, having their own subjects of conversa-

tion, and nothing in common with her, were very ready to indulge : only occasionally interrupting themselves, in a civil way, to call her attention to what was to be supposed interesting to a stranger.

But it was not the minute details of the place that she could even pretend to observe. Her mind was filled with the great, the overwhelming whole ; and its being *his* home—the house where he first drew breath : in these rooms his beautiful young form had carelessly sported, and that voice, which even in childhood must have been delightful, had echoed, day by day, up those wide staircases and painted walls.

It was just at the moment that these thoughts were pressing upon her with the greatest intensity, that a voice close at her ear cried, —“ Hartley ! Hartley ! d-e-a-r Hartley !” Completely thrown off her guard, Selby shrieked, as she turned, with a start, and saw at her shoulder Mrs. Damer’s cockatoo. Her companions were much amused at her nervous alarm ; and Selby laughed also, and called herself silly for being so frightened.

“ Poor Polly !” said she ; “ how well she talks ! I never heard a bird speak so distinctly.”

“ Oh ! it talks well enough,” said Miss Luttrell. “ It used to be very entertaining. There—that will do, Polly.”

And she was moving on : but Selby, with the childish wish of hearing even a parrot pronounce that name so precious to her ears, kept caressing and playing with the bird ; who, thus encouraged, erected its crest and danced to and fro on its

perch, repeating her lesson all the while,—“Dear Hartley! good Hartley!”

“Phoo, phoo!” said Mrs. Grey.

“Stupid bird!” said her friend, in a tone of absolute disgust. “Why don’t they teach it something to drive that nonsense out of its tiresome head? Hush, hush!” and with that both ladies shook their heads and their handkerchiefs at cockatoo; who, charmed with the excitement, turned topsyturvy on its perch, and expressed its sentiments in a lengthened scream that would have done honour to its native wood.

“Now, I hope, Miss Carew, you are satisfied with Polly’s performance,” said Mrs. Grey, as they all ran laughing away from the sound of the warwhoop.

“Ah! well,” said Esther, “Polly’s natural cry is better than its taught lesson—it’s honest, at least.”

Selby said nothing; but in her heart she thought they none of them deserved to have such a dear, clever bird belonging to them. It would be long enough before *she* should find fault with it for repeating that pretty little lesson.

They now turned into a long gallery, where the pictures Esther had mentioned were chiefly hung; and Miss Luttrell, in describing to her the names and circumstances of the subjects of the different family portraits, as they slowly passed them, inflicted many a secret pang upon her new cousin.

It was, indeed, impossible for Selby to fail observing that almost every one who had been connected with the Luttrells by marriage, was introduced to

her notice as rich or titled; and she was all the more impressed by this circumstance, from the unostentatious manner in which it was touched on. Had none of the Luttrell blood flowed in the veins of their young visitor, Esther would have suffered many a be-wigged gentleman and be-furbelowed lady to remain unparticularised; but it was only natural and right that a cousin, and a Carew, should desire to be made acquainted with the family connections, and must be proportionally interested in its intermarriages with sons of viscounts, and daughters of earls, and so forth.

"That is reckoned a fine painting," said she, pointing to one of the ugliest portraits in the room: a lady with mean features and sandy hair, but whose taper fingers rested on a table where a coronet stood displayed. Selby felt a peculiar satisfaction in depreciating her husband's high-born connections, so she assented with reluctance even to the excellence of the painting.

"She is so plain," said she; "that if the execution were twice as fine, it would be impossible to find pleasure in looking at such a face. Inferior as the picture (considered as such) may be, give me that lovely Miss Mellish, we have just passed: the banker's daughter I think you called her."

"No; her father was an East India director, and one of the richest of them. She was his only child; and I remember, when I was a little thing, listening to the account of my uncle Richard's grand wedding with the heiress of Foljambe Park."

"Ah!" observed Mrs. Grey, "that was quite a celebrated thing in its day: I heard that talked or when I was living at the Land's End: it must have made a noise in the world to have reached me there."

Selby was silenced, and resolved to forbear patronising any particular portrait in that collection. "The same principle," she sadly reflected, "governs everything here—riches or rank are the sole passports to favour."

She was mistaken, however; there seemed to be one exception to the rule, for Miss Luttrell said,—

"Oh! if you are so fond of looking at pretty faces, here is one that will be sure to please you," and leading the way into the library, she shewed Selby a crayon drawing which hung near the door. Selby expressed the liveliest admiration of this likeness, the subject of which was not apparently more than eighteen or nineteen years old, and possessed a beauty and sweetness of countenance which, when animated by life, might have rivelled her own.

"What a lovely mouth!" she exclaimed; "and what sweet eyes!"

"Yes," said Esther, in her cold manner; "she ought to have been pretty, for her face was all she had to recommend her."

"Indeed! how comes she here then?"

"Why the drawing is too good to be lost; that and the charms of the lady, which are certainly indisputable, give it consequence. But the fact is, she was a distant connection of ours—a branch of the family we are not anxious to acknowledge, except in the slightest possible manner—and this young person

was forced into notice by a nephew of my father's ; who ought to have known better than to bring her out of the obscurity she was born to." At this point Miss Luttrell remembered whose daughter she was addressing, and her good breeding induced her to shorten the story, by merely adding, "that it was one of those disastrous alliances which all families, even the most respectable, are liable occasionally to suffer from."

"Well," said Mrs. Grey, "yours, at least, has not been much annoyed in that way : I know few people of any consideration who have suffered less by imprudent marriages than the Luttrells. And after all, Esther, the poor girl herself had more to complain of than any one else concerned in the affair."

Here was a slight pause, which was broken by Miss Carew asking in a low voice, "What then became of her?"

"Oh, poor little thing ! her husband deserted her before the year was well over, and she died not long after that : some people said of consumption, but I fancy a broken heart had more to do with it than anything else. It was a melancholy history," the old lady concluded ; "very like some book I was reading the other day : but I've forgot the name of it."

"That's lucky," said Esther ; "for in that case you may read it again next week."

"Perhaps I may, my dear ;" and they went on talking upon indifferent matters, leaving their guest to stand before the picture of the ill-fated beauty, and moralize on the evil destiny of one whose sole

recommendation to the good-will of the Luttrels had been grounded on personal appearance.

"Deserted in one short year ! Well," she thought, with a struggling sigh, "on one thing I am resolved, *my* picture shall never be taken at all ; or, if it be, it shall be done by some obscure artist, whose chief merit consists in the fidelity of his likenesses. *My* poor face, whether living or dead, shall never encumber these walls merely on sufferance and as a work of art ; its presence accounted and apologized for to every stranger who enters the room."

The young voice of Miss Marsham broke the current of her thoughts. The flighty Fanny had been sent to tell them that coffee was ready in the drawing-room ; and having fulfilled her mission of hospitality, she favoured them with a few original remarks, all the while she kept sliding and slipping along on the polished oak floor. "Oh ! you should have been with us just now : you have lost such a treat."

"Indeed !"

"Yes ; Mrs. Hamilton has been reading poetry to us so beautifully—Milton : all about Adam and Eve, and a little bit of Satan, besides. I do think she recites better than anybody in the world ; and then it is not altogether her voice and all, but she's got such a way with her : now hasn't she ? I am sure *I* don't wonder at anybody being in love with her, she is so fascinating !"

To this animated praise Miss Luttrell frigidly replied, "That she had no doubt of Mrs. Hamilton having been much admired in her day ; but as a



married woman, of course all that sort of thing was gone by now."

"Is it?" asked Fanny; and looking very archly at her cousin, she executed a pirouette, which reflected infinite credit on her dancing-master; then, with a very significant smile—"I say, Esther, Polly's learned her lesson at last, hasn't she?" Esther was silent. "She has got it quite pat now—better a great deal than I get mine at horrid Miss Crump's: but then the teaching is everything, isn't it, Mrs. Grey? It is *such* a thing to be well taught!" and thereupon laughing, with a glee which seemed very far from infectious, Fanny spun round and round; accomplishing, in a superior style, that branch of calisthenics called by the young ladies at Latham House, "making cheeses."

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Grey, "Polly's a very good bird, for *she* minds what is said to her;" and here was a monitory look, which evidently meant that, while Miss Carew, a comparative stranger, was present, there was no occasion to enter into family affairs: and Esther, biting her lip, proposed returning to the drawing-room.

"I say, Esther," said Fanny, springing right before her, "How many of these planks can you jump over at a time? Come, now, never mind it's being Sunday; *do* try."

"Fanny, don't be so childish! You, a bridesmaid, indeed!"

"If I *were* childish," retorted Fanny, "you wouldn't care what I said; but you see, cousin, it is because I happen to be a little too knowing."

"Phoo, child!" said Mrs. Grey: it was exactly what she had said to the cockatoo, and it had as little effect.

"Knowing!" repeated her cousin contemptuously; and then added gravely, "and if you do know anything, you ought to be aware that it is not a subject to be babbled of by a school girl like yourself; especially before those who cannot be interested by the subject."

"Oh, I don't see that at all: everybody's interested when one talks about love; ain't they, Miss Carew?" Selby, finding herself in the way, was civilly pretending to examine the ornaments which stood on one of the old cabinets. "Don't you like vastly to hear about love matters? I do; especially when people are a little crossed: not that I believe there will be much to cross the people we are talking about. If a certain melancholy event *should* come to pass, you know, Mrs. Grey——"

"Fanny!" exclaimed both the ladies; while she, delighted to provoke her elders, skipped out of their way, and kept chattering on.

"Such a handsome couple as they'll make! I only hope I may be at the wedding; it will be a hundred times better than Miss Drake's. She such a queen of a woman! and if Hartley is but half as good-looking as his picture, he'll make a beautiful bridegroom. Ah, that likeness of his! Do you suppose, Mrs. Esther, I don't know all about that mysterious disappearance, *childish* as I am? Yes"—and she looked up at a gap which occurred between two of the portraits—"there hangs his great uncle the

judge, and his great great uncle the bishop; but what's become of the gallant captain that used to keep them company? Stupid old fogies! I'm a great deal wiser than you are; for I know very well where he is gone to, and you don't."

"Fanny, do be quiet!" said Mrs. Grey; while Miss Luttrell, watching her opportunity, suddenly seized the wild young thing, and keeping her firmly in her grasp, though not without difficulty, walked her off: evidently inflicting a very serious lecture as they went along.

"It is not the child that's to blame," observed Mrs. Grey. "People are so indiscreet before servants and young folks, and her own mother is the worst of all. Come, Miss Carew, shall we follow them?"

But Selby made no answer: she had heard the name of her husband coupled with that of Mrs. Hamilton—this person who appeared to stand in some peculiar affinity to the family, and with regard to whom there seemed some mystery; who was plainly an object of suspicion, dislike, and even a sort of dread, which had already surprised Selby: though, in the presumption of utter ignorance, she had fancied it a subject in no way affecting herself or her own condition. For a moment or two amazement was her only emotion, and in her extreme confusion and desire to hear more, she lost sight of her usual circumspection, and electrified Mrs. Grey, by asking point blank the meaning of what she had heard—

"What was Miss Marsham talking of? What could she mean about Mrs. Hamilton and ——." Another name was required to finish the question;

but she left it to be understood: she felt as if it would have choked her to pronounce it.

"Well!" thought the old lady, "of all the inquisitive people I ever met with!—dear me!" then affecting to treat the matter carelessly, she replied, "Oh! a mere nothing; but girls from school are so fond of magnifying everything they hear into a wonderful secret. Come, my dear, you seem tired with walking through these long rooms; suppose you take my arm: small and thin as it is, I can tell you, you might have a worse support."

Selby silently accepted her offer; she could speak but on one topic, and in her bewilderment knew not how to lead to it.

"It is the looking up at the pictures and ceilings that fatigues you," Mrs. Grey continued; having, of course, no suspicion that any mental uneasiness could have occurred to the fair Carew since her entrance into the gallery. "I've known it have that effect upon other people besides yourself: you must not look so high, my dear."

"Ah, ma'am!" replied poor Selby, with melancholy emphasis, "your caution comes too late;" and then she tried to take heart, and blamed herself for having been so startled with the rambling talk of a girl like Fanny Marsham; who, out of the mere accident of mutual good looks, had framed a little romance of her own, which was to provide for the fate of two persons yet strangers to her.

But *were* they strangers? Her thoughts, darting from point to point, discerned the possibility of Mrs. Hamilton and Hartley having been old acquaint-

ances: of their having known each other, perhaps, in childhood, or that still more dangerous age when youthful attachments begin their development; and in a moment more, Selby had filled up Fanny's shapeless sketch—her loose indication of the mystery.

Mrs. Hamilton had married another, it is true; but still she might have been Hartley's first love: and even during those halcyon days at Quin's Folly, she, now his wedded wife, might in fact have held but a divided empire over his affections. Such an idea had never before crossed her mind; and to a heart so entire in its affection it was utterly sickening. To leave the gallery in this state of uncertainty was to become a prey to the wildest and most afflicting conjectures: it seemed to her little short of distraction; yet, not daring to hazard another direct question, she could only loiter by the way, and watch with increasing impatience the turn her companion's gossiping tone would take, in the hope that some opportunity might occur for bringing her to the point she was longing to attain.

Mrs. Grey, supposing she slackened her pace because she was struck, as most visitors were, with the curious carving of the Luttrell arms on the chimney-piece, stopped before the spacious hearth, and observed,—

"That is a fine piece of wood-work, much admired by people who understand those sort of things; but I can't say it suits me."

"Don't you like it, ma'am?"

"Not at all, my dear: but that of course is my want of taste. You see, I am no friend to your

great, big, stately things, and I never feel quite at my ease among them. Give me a nice, comfortable room, neither too large nor too small, with a mantelpiece that I can reach without climbing a ladder. But perhaps, my dear, you may not be of my way of thinking: you may like the statelies, as I call them. Well, that is all quite right; you being a Luttrell, you know, by blood, though not by name: one of themselves, as one may say. Why, now, look at that dragon,"—and she pointed to one of the supporters of the shield which stood out in prominent relief—"not that he *is* a dragon: I believe they call him by some outlandish name, which I never pretend to remember. But those creatures of heraldry, Miss Carew, are all dragons to me: everything that grins and gapes, and has a tail with a spike at the end of it, I call a dragon."

It might have been the dragon of Wantley himself for anything Selby cared. "Well now, my dear, I declare to you I would not sit alone of a night with those frightful animals making faces at me over their shoulders, on any consideration. But there it is, you see: *I* have not a drop of Luttrell blood in my veins, though my husband had; and that I conclude makes all the difference. These griffins and things are looked on by the family as a sort of relations, and so they excite respect instead of fear. Ha, ha!"

"But," said Selby, "some people *are* afraid of their relations, ma'am. Miss Marsham, if she had not stood in some awe of her cousin, would not have been so easily silenced."

The old lady did not immediately reply ; perhaps she was considering how best to ward off the curiosity of cousin John's daughter : when she did speak, it was with less than her usual complacency.

" Fanny's a thoughtless girl," said she, " and makes a jest of what has caused some uneasiness already, and may in time to come be the occasion of much more."

Such an answer was ill calculated to allay the anxiety of her companion ; and Selby, speaking as indifferently as she could, pursued the subject, though her heart was fluttering sadly.

" Fanny spoke of a portrait," said she, " a likeness, I think, of Mr.—of Captain Luttrell. Did it hang there ?"

" Yes," said Mrs. Grey, drily : " but it has been removed for the last week or two ;" and there she stopped.

Selby could have implored her outright to speak plainer ; but she restrained herself to the tremulous question,—" Was it a bad likeness, then, that it was taken away ?"

" Bad ? No ! a capital likeness : and so much the worse."

Mrs. Grey had spoken hastily, and she was sorry for it ; for she had no respect for a curiosity which seemed to be as idle as it was discourteous. She could not understand how that genteel, lady-like, young creature could be so vulgarly inquisitive : the next thing would be that she would go and tattle imprudently amongst those Stukely people. So she tried to turn the discourse.

But Selby could not even pretend to listen to her on any other subject. Why should it be a matter of regret that Hartley's likeness had been so excellent? and how was this beautiful friend of the Luttrels implicated in so apparently simple a circumstance? She must know more! Ignorance on such a point was intolerable!

She fixed a determined eye on Mrs. Grey, as if to discover some weak point — some crevice in her armour of proof where she might launch her interrogatories; but the composed countenance and the neat compact little figure of the old lady seemed to defy her attacks: no exuberance of furbelow on the petticoat, no flaunting ribbon on her cap, inspired a hope of female indiscretion. The old-womanish disposition to talk for talking's sake could surely not consist with that respectable exterior. Would that she had been *tête-à-tête* with Fanny Marsham, instead of this impenetrable friend of the family! Still, time and opportunity were equally wearing away, and in proportion to her uncontrollable impatience was the audacity of her next attack; for, with only a very short preface by way of apology, she boldly asked:—“Who is this lady who seems to occasion such excitement here? Miss Marsham spoke of her as having something particular to do with this picture. Is she a relation? Has she any right to interfere in the arrangement of the furniture? Perhaps there was some old attachment between her and Captain Luttrell. Dear Mrs. Grey, who is this Mrs. Hamilton?”

Mrs. Grey, though highly condemning the free-



dom of these inquiries, could not help being a little amused by such undisguised curiosity.

"I see, my dear," said she, "you have not lived in vain in that gossip-loving Bath; but you should stay till you are as old as I am, before you take so openly to scandal: it doesn't accord with that smooth face and youthful appearance."

Selby understood the implied censure, but was too much excited to feel abashed.

"Yes: I dare say you think me very impertinent; but I confess I am curious. You know, Mrs. Grey,"—and she took the old lady's arm, and spoke in a sweet, coaxing manner, that few could have resisted,—"you know you told me just now how fond you were of a novel; and, after all, a story of real life is so much more impressive." And then again came that little (but to her most awful) question, in such a timid, seductive tone of voice,—"Could it be that there was any former liking between these two handsome persons whom Fanny was talking about?"

"What! the captain and Mrs. H.? Oh, dear, no: nothing of the sort. Their acquaintance is by no means of long standing; for Mr. Hamilton was serving in a different part of the Peninsula till about fourteen or fifteen months ago: but in these stirring times people soon rub together, and become, as it were, old friends in a very short space of time."

"Her husband is an officer, then?"

"Didn't you know that? Yes: that accounts for the sudden intimacy, you know. They have been all campaigning together; she playing the heroine,

and following her husband about wherever women were allowed to go—and sometimes where they had no business to be, I fancy ; for she tells wonderful stories about her military experiences, and as the poor man does not contradict her, I suppose they are true enough. But I trust, my dear Miss Carew, you will not misinterpret anything that I may say to you about the lady we are speaking of. The fact is, she is a very showy, accomplished person ; highly educated, and all that : in short, what the gentlemen call ‘fascinating.’ But we in this family are very particular as to manners ; especially those of a married woman ; and she is a little too—too enthusiastic for us. Means nothing improper by it, of course ; but when she takes a fancy for a person, whether it be man or woman, she is apt to exaggerate her feelings, and express her partiality a little too freely to suit our strict old-fashioned notions : that’s all.”

“ And does she talk in this way of *him* ? ”

“ Why, to tell you the truth, there *has* been rather more said about Mr. Hartley than we thought quite necessary : a little too much enthusiasm about his fine qualities, and his fine eyes, and so on. And then his likeness was to be stared at, and admired ; till his poor mother, in a fright, had it taken down (though it is the very delight of her heart), and sent it to a picture-cleaner’s, to get it out of her way : and that’s the story you heard that foolish child alluding to. But you, Miss Carew, are older and wiser than Fanny ; and I am sure we may rely on your discretion for never repeating a word of all this, wherever you may be staying. It would, I need scarcely say,

be extremely annoying to the family, to find their private affairs made the common talk of the neighbouring county."

"Oh, ma'am, you little know me, if you think me capable: indeed, I am the last person you need caution. Mr. Hamilton, I imagine, came home on account of his health?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Grey. "What with the hardships of a soldier's life, and a predisposition to be consumptive, he fell into a very weak state soon after he had joined Captain Luttrell's regiment; and then it was, you see, that they took such a great liking to each other: for poor Mr. Hamilton is a most amiable and interesting person, so Mr. Hartley looked after him as if he had been his brother; and when Captain Luttrell happened to be wounded in storming that fort—you saw the account of it, I dare say, in the papers——"

"Oh, yes: I know all about it."

"Well, my dear, then Mrs. Hamilton took care of him in return; nursed him till he got well, and was complimented to the skies by the regimental surgeon. Ha! ha! It is a queer world we live in. Not that really, Miss Carew, to hear the story told, there seems anything either wrong or remarkable in it: no one can blame her for doing all she could for her husband's brother-officer; especially in the case of one who had been so kind to him. It is not in the plain facts of the case, that there is anything to object to: it is only 'her manner,' as Fanny says. She has such a way with her; so flighty and warm in her expressions. Yet it is evident her husband

thinks no evil of it ; for, all the time she is going on in her extravagant way, there sits the poor pale ghost of a man, so wrapped up in her, that in his eyes she can do no wrong. To me, there is something quite pathetic in such a scene. But we must quicken our steps, my dear, or they will be sending the crier after us."

But, instead of moving faster, Selby came to a halt ; as, turning to Mrs. Grey, she expressed her surprise that the family should receive so objectionable a person amongst them.

"Why, what can they do?" said Mrs. Grey. "The kindness she had shewn Captain Luttrell, and his warm recommendation of them both, gave them an indisputable claim on the favour of the Luttrells ; and, finding they had a mind to settle in this neighbourhood—why? nobody, I fancy, but the lady herself, can tell ; for Mr. Hamilton's native Devonshire would suit him a great deal better : but she chooses to live within sight of Horton—so here they were invited to stay till they could find a place to suit them.

But, as you may suppose after what I have said, it was not long before Mr. Luttrell heartily repented the proposal ; for it has brought on such a close intimacy, that now there is no retreating ; so that, when the captain comes home—and he's expected very shortly—he will find them established in our very precincts : for Myrtle Cottage, as they call it, is only just beyond the park palings. And then, if poor Mr. Hamilton goes off, as there is too much reason to fear he will, and Mr. Hartley sees how handsome she looks in her widow's weeds!—ah!

dear! dear! I do think it would be almost the death of poor Mrs. Luttrell, if that son she doats upon should marry to disappoint her hopes: and, with her high ideas of what his wife ought to be, she could never endure this lady for a daughter-in-law: I am quite convinced of that. Are you cold, my dear? I thought I felt you shiver."

"Oh, no, ma'am, I thank you, I am remarkably warm;" and then before Mrs. Grey could change the subject—which the old lady in her own mind thought they had canvassed a great deal more than was necessary—Selby softly asked her, if it was quite a certainty that Mrs. Hamilton's sentiments were shared by Captain Luttrell? There was no man living, least of all such a man as he was described to be, who would not be grateful for the attentions she had shewn him; and might not she and all his friends have misconceived the expressions of his feelings to be something too much akin to her own?

"It is not," she continued, warming with the subject, "it is not because this unprincipled woman throws off the modesty of her sex, that *he* is to lose sight of all that is good, and forget every dictate of religion and honour. Oh, Mrs. Grey, think—think of what it is that they accuse him! The wife of the man he calls his friend! Oh, they must be wicked themselves to suspect him of such baseness!"

Now Mrs. Grey took this tirade (for as such it appeared to her) rather personally; and defended herself thereupon, in the worldly tone of one who

was versed in the ways of mankind: ay, and of womankind also.

"All that is very fine, my dear," said she, "and does credit, I dare say, to your own proper sentiments: though, as you know next to nothing of the parties in question, you can't be expected to speak with much judgment; but I can tell you, if you don't know it already, that it is one thing for a man to act uprightly in the ordinary affairs of life—to fight well, and talk well, and write pretty letters to his mama—and quite another to keep himself from falling in love with his neighbour's wife; if she happens to be such a woman as Mrs. H. (it's as well not to mention names): quite another thing, believe me."

"Do you think so, ma'am?"

"Yes, indeed I do, my dear. Not that I mean to say affairs have gone so far as that, with Mr. Hartley. God forbid they should! But an old person like me, Miss Carew, who has seen (begging your pardon) so much more of the world than you have, understands what a dangerous situation it must be for a young man to be watched, and petted, and coddled, and cosseted, under pretence of nursing, by a pretty woman: fancy those fine eyes of hers (you noticed them this morning) glancing about his pillow, and seeing to everything that could soothe and make him comfortable."

Selby *did* fancy it, and grew sick at heart.

"Depend on it, my dear Miss Carew, the very best and wisest of men are weak as water wherever women are concerned. I've seen so much of it in

my day. All this French sentiment and attitudinizing goes down with them so easily. They can't help it, poor things: it's constitutional with them. They cannot help being taken in by us, do what they may: it's the old story of the bird and the rattlesnake; and take my word for it, our handsome neighbour may be Mrs. Captain Luttrell, if she likes it, by the time her first year's mourning for that poor man is laid aside."

So, finishing her argument in this comfortable strain, Mrs. Grey again enforced upon her inquisitive companion, the propriety of keeping everything that had been told her touching family matters profoundly secret; and as Miss Carew walked on without returning her the slightest answer, the old lady concluded that the young one was sulky at being thus admonished.

"Another proof of ill manners," thought she: "and I wish that chit, Fanny Marsham, had been further, before she had occasioned my saying anything about the captain and Mrs. Hamilton before this young person."

As they repassed grandmama's pet, poor Polly, waking from her twilight dozing, uttered a sleepy croak of recognition; but no more caresses awaited her from the fair hand that had lately stroked her so kindly: for well could Selby now comprehend who had taught her her last new lesson, and why the theme was so distasteful to the family; and she regarded the innocent creature with a species of horror, as but a feathered impersonation of the evil principle—a coadjutrix of Mrs. Hamilton's.

## CHAPTER V.

IF, in the apprehension of the gentlemen, Miss Carew had looked beautiful before taking her walk in the picture gallery, they must now have thought her positively brilliant: such a bloom overspreading her soft complexion, such a sparkle in her eyes, such an almost eager animation in every look and movement. Not that those looks were often directed towards any one of them; Mrs. Hamilton was the centre round which all her thoughts were revolving; and she could not keep her eyes from wandering perpetually to the same direction. Even that dear uncle Francis had become, for the time, a cipher in her estimation; and so it was with all the party assembled: she might be conscious of their presence, might even talk and smile, and seem at ease—as the most broken-hearted of human creatures must of necessity do in “good society”—but they were unsubstantial and unmarked; Mrs. Hamilton, the only reality: her form alone stood out distinctly before her; and above all other voices, louder or deeper though they might be, it was hers whose slightest word fell with painful certainty on Selby’s ear.



At their first meeting, she had looked at this lady as she would have done at some beautiful picture, or finished piece of workmanship; which claimed her honest admiration, though she had no desire to possess it: but henceforth a far deeper interest must attach to her; and each insignificant movement, and every turn of her countenance, created a thrill such as jealousy only can inflict. It was the first time in her life that she had fallen under the influence of that agonizing and most humiliating passion; and no wonder that she felt, in its utmost intensity, the bitterness of the poison she was imbibing drop by drop.

Captain Romilly presently claimed from the fair Carew something more than a divided attention, he would be heard.

"It is strange!" said he; "but I am haunted by an idea—a strong impression, that I have somewhere had the happiness of meeting you, before to-day. Is such a thing possible, or am I to believe that I have seen you only in my dreams?"

"Pray, indulge him," said Sir William Gascoigne, "by favouring the wildest possible theory: no other will find favour with Captain Romilly."

But Selby answered, that such a meeting was by no means improbable, supposing he had ever been to Bath. "It is there I live," said she; "and though I visit but seldom, and never go to the rooms, yet perhaps at some evening party——"

"No, no;" and he shook his head, and kept looking her thoughtfully in the face. "It could not be at Bath: your countenance brings with it no train of frivolous fancies—no connection with cards and coun-

try dances, weak tea and water ices—no Bath, with its gaudy Milsom-street, its bustle and high winds : yours is a face which recalls to my mind only images of simplicity and perfect repose.”

“Surely,” said Mr. Francis, gallantly, “there needed no previous acquaintance with my fair cousin to give you that impression.”

Captain Romilly took no notice of the interruption, leaning half over the back of a chair which stood near Selby, he continued gazing upon her ; not rudely, but with extreme earnestness.

“It must have been a dream, after all,” said he : “a vision of the early morning, when the dew is on the earth, and dreams come truest. You have no idea how strangely familiar your face is to me—your movements, and the very turn of your head. There, there !” he eagerly exclaimed, as Selby smiled at what seemed to her, and all who were listening to him, as merely the wild fancies of an enthusiastic temperament ; “that smile, how well I know it ! Heaven above ! if I had but been a German student, instead of the dull, prosy fellow I am, what a tissue of mysterious matter I might weave out of such an incident as this : I wish I had been ! I envy them their glorious fancies, their mighty conceptions of the wonderful and unearthly. Mrs. Hamilton,” and he suddenly turned to where she was sitting,—“Mrs. Hamilton, you believe in a mysterious affinity of souls ?—especially,” he added, in a lower tone, not intended for the lady’s ear, though it did not escape Selby’s,—“especially souls in the same regiment.”

"Who can doubt it for a moment?" said she, rousing herself from a languid attitude, and raising her dark eyes with as much enthusiasm as his own.

"Who, indeed?" murmured her husband softly, and looking at her with unutterable tenderness.

"Yes, yes," said Romilly; "I know you do: you believe that no created being is destined to the solitude of his own individual nature, but that in some part of the world there dwells the one spirit congenial to his own; and that perfect happiness can never be his portion on earth, till Heaven, in its mercy, brings them together—yes, that is your theory: I have heard you say so a hundred times."

"No, Captain Romilly; I may hold something like this belief, but you never heard me make it the subject of frequent discussion. There are but one or two in the whole world to whom I could endure to speak of those things which lie deepest in my heart, and are dearest to my imagination: subjects like these are sacred to the few—the *very, very* few!"

"The fewer the better, I should think," said Mr. Mauleverer, impatiently. "Theories so wild, and opposed to all the principles of truth and common sense, had better be confined to as few disciples as possible."

"Oh, but Mrs. Hamilton," said Fanny Marsham, eagerly, "do you mean to say there is only one chance in a person's whole lifetime for their getting married? And do you think it depends all on one's first love? Why, my gracious! you know he may die! or get his legs shot off! or break his nose, and

lose all his beauty! Oh, mama! what should I do then?"

Miss Marsham's school-girl absurdity threw a seasonable air of ridicule over the subject.

"Don't be frightened, Fanny," said Romilly, carelessly; "you may be married three times over, if you like it."

Sir William Gascoigne looked odd, and his lady uneasy.

"But not to three husbands at once," observed Carew; "for that might be awkward."

"The question has nothing in the world to do with marriage," said Romilly; "it is of love we were speaking—quite another thing from matrimony," and as he spoke his eye glanced again towards Mrs. Hamilton, while her brother's dark brow lowered as he looked at him, and again the word "puppy" trembled on his lips.

Here Mr. Fothergill took up the topic, though it is to be doubted if his observations threw much light on the subject under discussion.

"I don't mean to say that my lamented Mrs. Fothergill was exactly my first love: I rather think not; but I can safely say that never was there a more devoted or happier couple than ourselves. We were united for seven-and-thirty years—a long while for two persons to live together!"

"Did you find it so, sir?" inquired Sir William, smiling.

"What a strange question, Sir William!" said his lady, a little reproachfully.

"Why, you know," said the old gentleman, fid-

getting about in his chair, as he was wont to do when a little embarrassed—and a very small matter did embarrass him, “it is more than half the period allotted to man: three score years and ten, you know, Sir William.”

“Ah, sir,” said Romilly, “but that rule applies only to bachelors; “it is a well-known fact that married men live to the age of Methuselah: they are always so well taken care of.”

Mr. Hamilton confirmed the remark by a look of grateful affection towards his wife; thinking, no doubt, good man, that her dearest endeavour was to make a Methuselah of him.

“Ah, that they are, indeed, Captain Romilly,” said the old widower, who was much more alive to the matter of fact than the facetious in conversation; “and I have little doubt that the loss of my lamented partner will be found some day to have shortened my existence very materially.” And he ended with a little sigh; so small, indeed, and easily ejected, that, though meant assuredly as a tribute to the dear departed, it would have answered quite as well for a symptom of repletion as of pathos: fat gentlemen may sigh before noon, with the reasonable hope of exciting the sympathy of their audience; but the case wears a totally different aspect after dinner.

The talk then fell much on love and matrimony; and, as they are topics generally popular, most of the company had something to say thereupon: but amongst the ladies there were three exceptions—Mrs. Hamilton, Miss Luttrell, and Selby Carew.

"Now, do observe," said Captain Romilly, addressing them as the others were talking, "how the puzzle-headedness of the few will suffice to muddle the brains of the many. The question, as it originally stood, was, I flatter myself, fit for the speculation of intelligent beings; but Fanny Marsham and that prosy old gentleman, between them, have managed to clip the wings of our Pegasus, and spoil him for anything but a hack."

"Yes," said Sir William, who happened to overhear him; "and now all the talk runs upon good and bad marriages, and we set to work to number up how many of our acquaintance are blest or cursed in being coupled together; so that what was first broached as an innocent fancy, becomes, in the end, a mere vehicle for scandal."

"And after all," said Mrs. Hamilton, contemptuously, "the warmest asserters of married felicity make but a lame panegyric of it: Mrs. Marsham stops short at the matrimonial bliss of her two married daughters, and Mr. Fothergill gets no farther than quoting some Captain and Mrs. Pringle, of the Indian service; who, I suppose, have been parted from each other three years, at least, out of every four that they are reported to have lived so happily together!"

"I beg your pardon," said young Romilly, raising his finger in mock attention, "another couple are being, at this moment, brought forward for the praise of ourselves and posterity yet unborn: Mr. and Mrs. Jones, of Abingdon-street, Westminster, and White Hall, in the county of Devonshire!"

"Devonshire," repeated Mr. Hamilton; "yes, Devonshire is the place for happy matches."

Selby looked hastily round; for, in the tumult of her mind, she believed he was addressing himself particularly to her; and the invalid observing, though utterly misinterpreting the look she gave him, asked her if she was acquainted with his native county? Selby owned she was familiar with some part of Devonshire, though she forbore to particularize the spot where she had passed her seventeenth summer; willing, however, to escape the conversation that was passing amongst the others, she drew near the sofa where the invalid was reclining, and found a gentle, though mournful satisfaction in encouraging him to speak on what seemed to him to be so interesting a theme: and as his connections happened to be in quite an opposite quarter to the vicinity of Quin's Folly, their reminiscences were luckily in no danger of clashing.

"Yes," said he, after dwelling in glowing terms on the beautiful scenery in which his childhood had been spent; and tenderly, though with much delicacy, alluding to his introduction in the same neighbourhood to Mrs. Hamilton; "it was my favourite wish, when we returned to England, to have gone immediately into Devonshire, and have made that our abiding place."

"And may I ask why you did not indulge so natural a wish?"

"There was some idea of the kind," said he; "but Alicia—Mrs. Hamilton, was so anxious to improve her acquaintance with this dear family, that I could

not bear to urge my own gratification at the expense of her feelings. I, Miss Carew, am fully persuaded,"—and here he lowered his voice, that Mrs. Hamilton might not hear him, though she was talking too earnestly with the other gentlemen to listen to anything he was saying,—“I am well aware—though she, dear creature, is happily, most happily, blind to the truth—that I have but a very short period of existence to look forward to in this world; and it will, I assure you, be no slight comfort to me in the hour of separation, to know that I am leaving her in the bosom of a society like this: amongst friends, so every way excellent in themselves, and so capable of appreciating her. No; it would have been cruel to take her away!” and he looked fondly at the object of his love and confidence; as she, with her magnificent eyes fixed unflinchingly on those of Captain Romilly, kept enlarging on some animating topic: he, all the while, attending to her with more of amusement than sympathy in his manner, for he grudged every moment that was not devoted to the beautiful Carew; while Mr. Mauleverer hovered about the group, looking, as Selby thought, extremely like a certain figure of Satan which she had seen in some old church window, smiling sardonically, and ever ready to snarl.

“It might have seemed unkind, perhaps,” said Selby; “unless your own health has been made the sacrifice to Mrs. Hamilton’s convenience: the restoration of that must be her first and sole object.” She spoke as pointedly in her secret anger, as if the lady herself had been hearing every syllable she said.



"And where could you hope to gain strength so soon as in the mild climate of your own Devonshire?"

"Oh," he replied immediately, as if eager to exonerate his beloved Alicia from the slightest shadow of reproach, "her solicitude for me is unbounded—it is painfully great! I know, had I suffered her to penetrate my sentiments, she would have insisted on making every sacrifice; and this prevents my breathing a wish of the sort, or even alluding to the subject before her. Besides," after a short pause, which Selby felt no inclination to break, "there is still another and a weighty motive to bind me to this spot; and that is the hope which, in spite of my increasing infirmities, I cannot help indulging, that I may yet pass some little time with my dear friend Hartley Luttrell: that thought, Miss Carew, reconciles me fully to remaining here. I have many kind friends in my native place, whom I would fain take leave of; but they are, none of them, nor can they ever become, what he has been to me. So you see," and he smiled faintly, "I am a selfish being after all. I have an idea—a foolish one, I dare say it is—a sort of presentiment that he will be with me at the last moment; and, though I believe it will be a trial to him, yet, for Alicia's sake, as well as my own, I cannot but hope that so it may be. None can soothe her grief like that noble and excellent friend!"

Every word he uttered seemed to fall on the heart rather than the ear of the miserable girl who sat beside him; and the flush which had risen to her face at the mention of her husband, subsided into a paleness so extreme, that Mrs. Luttrell, who was

sitting rather apart with the Lodgites and Carew, observed the change of complexion, and thought she penetrated the feelings which had caused it. She immediately arose and came to Selby's relief.

"You are talking more than is good for you, Mr. Hamilton," she said: "I must remove your temptation from you;" and drawing Selby's arm within hers, she gently led her away to the other end of the room. "I can see, my dear Miss Carew," said she, "that conversing with that poor man affects you exactly as it does me: to hear him speaking of himself in the melancholy yet resigned tone he so often assumes, is almost more than I can bear. I am often hardly able to refrain from tears, when I hear him go on so."

"Oh, it is dreadful!" said Selby, pressing her hand on her side, and heaving a deep sigh (very different from Mr. Fothergill's).

They approached one of the windows, which the mildness of the evening allowed to be left open, and stood before it, as if enjoying the moonlight: but there was a gloom over the spirits of both, which the finest scenery under the heavens could not have dispelled; and though Mrs. Luttrell uttered some languid remark on the beauty of the night, she scarcely obtained an answer. She saw that Miss Carew's thoughts were full of the amiable invalid: she could evidently talk on nothing else; and Mrs. Luttrell esteemed her all the more for the interest she took in him.

"There is something," said Selby, "so strange, so almost unearthly, in listening to a creature on the

very brink of the grave—one whose doom is written on his features, who seems to belong neither to this world nor the next ! I have never felt this half so much in a sick chamber : but to hear that hollow voice mixing with the laughter and gaiety of the others ! Oh !” and she shuddered, “ it is unnatural—it is appalling !” She could give no utterance to the feelings which oppressed her far more than those she ventured to touch upon ; but her tone of despondency found a ready sympathizer.

“ Do you think it, then, so *very* hopeless a case ?” inquired Mrs. Luttrell, with an anxiety which Selby thoroughly comprehended.

“ Alas !” she replied, “ what can be expected from such a cough as that ?”

“ Oh ! I gave him over from the very first : I never had the least hope. But, then, they tell me I am desponding about everything. Perhaps,” Mrs. Luttrell added, speaking rather to herself than her companion,—“ perhaps I have but too much cause to fear ;” and then for a little while they stood together in silence, each busy with her own thoughts.

While almost every word that was uttered that night seemed fated to increase Selby’s anxiety, yet so much was she bent on observing the beautiful Alicia, and ascertaining, as far as was possible, the actual ground of Mrs. Grey’s alarming hints, that she felt sorry when the Hamiltons prepared to depart. A close carriage of the Luttrells was always at the disposal of the invalid ; and, in compliance with his early habits, it was ordered to be ready to convey him home at a little past nine o’clock.

A sort of sickly impatience crept over Selby as she reflected how little probability there was of her meeting these people again during her stay in the country ; and, as Mrs. Hamilton tied a shawl about her husband's throat, and submitted her own fair shoulders to be cloaked by her brother, Luttrell's unhappy wife took a long and lingering look of her whom she believed to be her rival : as if she would have impressed on her memory as distinctly as possible every trace and lineament of that being who was destined, perhaps, to ruin her every earthly hope of happiness. It seemed as if little more could happen to agitate her before she lost sight of the Hamiltons, yet there was still a pang or two in store for her : trifles in themselves, yet tending to confirm the fears which that fatal dialogue in the picture gallery had engendered.

Some one asked the Hamiltons what were their plans for the morrow ; and the fair Alicia repeated the word with an expression of countenance which, handsome as she was, shewed plainly that her maiden name had been Mauleverer : a family likeness more strong than agreeable.

"Plans! what a term to apply to us and our monotonous life! Edward, do you hear Lady Gascoigne's inquiry?" and she went on settling the wraps about his neck. "What are your plans? How have you laid out the great events of the ensuing day? Is the chicken for your dinner to be boiled or roasted, love? Or when we take our important drive in the morning, shall we turn the ponies towards Medland Brooks or Horwood Common?"

"That, I should think, required little consideration," observed Mrs. Marsham. "The Brooks are a perfect paradise; while Horwood is, to my mind, one of the bleakest spots."

"Oh! but the air there is so fresh!—so good for Hamilton!"

"Ah! true: but don't you call it rather bleak?"

"Now, Alicia," said her husband, playfully, "that shall not pass. You know you go there entirely for the sake of having a gossip with your old woman."

"Well," said she, with a winning smile, that went to Selby's very heart, "I own I do enjoy chatting with dear old nurse Grimstone."

"Nurse Grimstone!" said Mrs. Luttrell, drawing up. "What can you have to do with her? She is not poor enough to engage your benevolent sympathies; and I am sure I know of nothing else that can interest you in the old woman."

"I can't quite agree with you there, Isabella," said Mr. Francis. "Grimstone is a fair enough specimen of the old school of domestics: a race, I am sorry to think, going fast out of date."

Mr. Fothergill here observed that he had had his 'John' going on for five years, and held forth on the merits of his housekeeper; while Mrs. Hamilton proceeded,—

"I have no great sympathy for the generality of faithful old servants, as they are called; for I think them generally a very tedious, tiresome set: but this old person is evidently of quite a superior stamp. One may always listen to her with pleasure: I could talk to her for hours without feeling weary."

"You would find it a sad waste of time," said Mrs. Damer, very coldly. "Mrs. Grimstone is by no means superior to the rest of her class, either in capacity or education. To me she is insufferable."

"Oh! but Mrs. Damer, her fidelity! her warm attachment to your family; and especially to Captain Luttrell, her foster-child! She treasures every anecdote of his childhood, and relates them with so much feeling, that I love beyond anything to get her on her old stories."

"Yes," said Mr. Hamilton; "Alicia quite wins the old woman's heart by leading her to talk of Hartley. I believe," he added, with his characteristic simplicity, "I am, on these occasions, the only impatient one of the party. I *do* get a little tired, in spite of the subject under discussion: the ponies and I begin to grow restive together—don't we, Alicia?"

"Ah! by-the-bye," said Captain Romilly, "I do think I remember Hartley telling us once something about his old nurse."

"Of course, you do," cried Mrs. Hamilton, her face lighting up as she spoke. "I am sure you must remember the very evening that conversation took place: *I* can recall it perfectly."

"Yes," said Romilly; "I was asserting that the very ugliest old women in the world were to be found in Spain; and he, though agreeing with me in general, insisted on making one glorious exception in favour of some old crone who had tended him in his infancy. If I remember rightly, he particularized her beard as the longest ever beheld on

a female chin : Macbeth's witches, he swore, were not to be compared to her in point of whisker."

Mrs. Hamilton looked by no means pleased at the hearty laugh with which Romilly's reminiscences were received by the company ; especially as her brother observed upon them, with his peculiar smile,—

" And so ends your effort at the sentimental, Mrs. Hamilton ! Come, we are keeping Mrs. Luttrell's horses waiting ; and your husband won't be the better for standing, while you discuss the length of Mrs. Grimstone's beard with Captain Romilly."

When the Hamiltons were gone, the scene possessed no further interest for Selby. Much that had seemed important to her on her entrance into that house had faded into utter insignificance since the revelations of Mrs. Grey. The feverish excitement which had lent animation to her spirits sank at once. Her changed looks attracting notice, she was taxed with being ill ; and, as she dared not declare that she was only miserable, she was ready to subscribe to any malady the company might please to attribute to her.

Amongst the foremost of her sympathizing friends were Mrs. Luttrell and Mr. Francis ; the latter of whom took occasion to whisper audibly, in his daughter's hearing, a warm encomium on the rare quality of Miss Carew's beauty, which seemed to defy those deteriorating accidents that generally proved fatal to female charms : the absence of all colour—what artists would style the " carnations"—heightened rather than injured the attractions of her countenance, in his opinion.

And Sir William Gascoigne fully agreed with him. That gentleman had been doing his utmost to make his wife thoroughly uncomfortable, by telling her what a striking likeness he had discovered in Miss Carew to the first Lady Gascoigne; so that all the while Selby was watching Mrs. Hamilton in jealous agony, she was herself the object of secret disturbance to poor little number three; who worried all her female friends with her ready confidences, and lachrymose remarks on this irrefragable proof of her husband's unbounded attachment to the memory of his first wives.

"How he must have doated on her, when a casual resemblance like this can so deeply affect him! It is a beautiful trait in Sir William's character to be thus strong in his attachments; but you don't know how painful it is to me."

In an unwary moment, Lady Gascoigne allowed her querulous complaints to come to the ears of Mrs. Damer; and forthwith received from that awful quarter so severe a rebuke as sent her crying to bed.

There was something very like a struggle between Mr. Carew and Captain Romilly, as to which of the two should escort Selby to the carriage: each had something very particular to say to her. Her father wanted to congratulate her on the very favourable impression she had made at Horton, and boast, parenthetically, of his own good management in bringing her there; and he was also desirous of taking leave of her that same night, it seeming probable to him that he should proceed to London, in



company with Romilly; whom he understood to have fixed an early hour for his departure the following morning: but as to his plans even for the morrow, cousin John was not yet quite in a position to determine finally.

A father's claims on his daughter's attention could not be disputed, and the young officer saw, with more vexation than so trifling a matter seemed to justify, the defeat of his hopes of ascertaining the truth of certain conjectures as to the identity of the fair Carew with that once cherished idol of his passionate nature, the beauty in the poke bonnet. His instant impression, as they met in the churchyard that morning, was, that he had seen and admired her before; and ere many hours had passed, he contrived to connect that slender figure and face of peculiar loveliness with his Devonshire goddess: her whose image, though grown fainter with the lapse of time, even to this day remained vivid enough in his remembrance, to serve as a point of comparison with every handsome woman who crossed his path.

Nothing would have pleased him better than the perfect establishment of a fact so exciting to his romantic fancy; but his very thirst for the wonderful seemed to render this recognition too singular a thing to be immediately credited. Could it be really possible, that after having so long relinquished the hope of discovering this charming *incognita*, he should now find her occupying a prominent and honoured place in the very family with whom circumstances had associated him so intimately? as lovely, ay, lovelier than ever! and still unmarried,

too—but what was that to him? curiosity was the only passion he might now indulge in connection with Selby Carew.

While seeming to listen to Mrs. Hamilton, he had distinguished a portion of the conversation which passed between Selby and the invalid, and heard her acknowledge an acquaintance with some part of Devonshire. So far, therefore, his apparently wild theory was corroborated; and two words, could he only command her attention for as many minutes, would suffice to instruct him in all he was burning to know: for of course it never entered Romilly's mind that Miss Carew could have the least objection to specify the particular part of that particular county with which she was familiar. But everything turned out adverse to his schemes: he saw the object of his interest disappear—perhaps for ever—from his sight, without having contrived to question her; and though he failed not to interrogate Carew, that gentleman, father as he was to the fair creature in question, was himself too much in the dark, as to the proceedings of his ladies during his many years absence from them, to afford any authentic information on the subject.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE plea of indisposition, under which Selby had accounted for a disturbance she felt to be visible to the most indifferent spectator, was fully confirmed by her subsequent behaviour. During their drive home she never voluntarily opened her lips, and answered with such apparent difficulty, the polite inquiries addressed to her, that her companions began to think seriously of the case, and talk about a doctor.

The threat effectually aroused her from her indifference to passing events, and she conquered the hysterical tendency so as to ward off the family adviser : at least for the present. She imputed everything to fatigue and the hurry of spirits attendant on her forced journey to Horton ; and, with a faint laugh and a wretched attempt at gaiety, she promised that a night's rest should cure her completely.

" A night's rest !" she felt the words to be a mockery as she uttered them ; for what had *she* to do with rest that night ?—with the face of her beautiful rival ever before her, and the echo of that clear musical voice, incessantly repeating in her ear the

words that had most alarmed her : the hiss of the very reptile, the rattle-snake to which Mrs. Grey had compared her, would have been far more welcome to Selby than those tones of half-suppressed passion ; which seemed, to her tortured soul, to declare the fickleness, if not the guilt, of the husband she doated on.

Then, as her mind wandered from one frightful accident to another, it would be the familiar, easy flow of Mrs. Grey's discourse that would recur to her remembrance ; enforcing upon her the irresistible power of such women as Mrs. Hamilton ; or Fanny Marsham's shrill voice, uttering riddles which were afterwards to be so alarmingly explained. But, above all, she pondered upon whatever, in the recent conduct of Hartley, might tend to confirm the suspicions thus excited. Little would she have feared the influence of Mrs. Hamilton, had there not been something busy at her heart, which whispered her that the fascinating Alicia might have some ground for nursing her unholy partiality for her husband's friend.

Up to this period, Mrs. Carew had been the scape-goat to bear the blame of Luttrell's coldness and reserve ; but here, in the attractions of this captivating woman, there might be found a far more natural explanation of it. Every phrase in his correspondence that had struck her as less kind than usual—every omission—in short, all that she had been used to apologize and account for, in the tenderness of a love which knew no bounds in its confidence, was now regarded with the eye of jealousy ; and even

the most solid and indisputable evidences of his early affection grew dim and indistinct, as she viewed them through the halo of Mrs. Hamilton's charms.

Not for the world would she that night have beheld her own face in the looking-glass ; for, in the mortification of her spirit, she believed the contrast it would offer to that of her magnificent rival would have been insupportable to her. Too completely absorbed in her misery to reckon the hours as they passed by, she was roused from her fits of animated grief, or dark despondency, by the gradual illumination of the chamber. The sun was rising in unclouded glory : another day had stolen upon her ; but how different from the previous one, or from any that had gone before it ! The trial she had now to bear was so new to her, so frightfully sudden !

With scarcely an object in her movements, she arose from the large chair in which she had passed the night, and drew back the window-curtain. Her room happened to be the only one in the Lodge which afforded any glimpse of Horton : from hence, over the surrounding woods and shrubberies, a small portion of the Hall was visible ; its pinnacles and bright vanes reflecting the pure light of early morning ; and the inhabitants of its ancient rookery beginning to bestir themselves, and send forth their monotonous, but pleasant cawing. Poor Selby leaned her head against the window-frame, and gazed upon that one corner of the landscape, till the tears flowed so fast she could look no longer.

The firm persuasion of Hartley's love and truth,

had formed her sole support in her introduction to his family. Deprived of this assurance, what would be her position amongst them? Perhaps that of the deserted, broken-hearted young wife, whose history she had listened to in that fatal gallery; and whose lot she had mourned over, as it now seemed to her, with something of a sad presentiment.

At last she dragged herself to bed, and fell asleep, just an hour before Mrs. Martin came to call her. It was a summons she did not attempt to obey: she could not meet the family party at the breakfast table, with the smooth brow and disengaged manner which would be expected; so, abiding by the vague excuse of continued weariness, she requested to have some tea brought her, and declined rising immediately. When up, it was her plan to resume her travelling dress at once; and, by shading her eyes with her hat and veil, do all she could to prevent their redness from being observed.

The account of their guest's indisposition (which Martin, of course, made the most of) excited various emotions in the family: unmixed solicitude on the part of the master of the house; unmitigated dissatisfaction on that of his daughter—who apprehended, as one of the most disagreeable things that could happen to her, the being saddled with the further company of “the fair Carew.”

“Nothing feverish, I trust,” said Mrs. Grey, with a glance at the children: “but, you know, we all observed how much she was flushed last night.”

“I noticed what you allude to,” was the ready rejoinder of Mr. Francis; and Sir William Gas-

coigne agreed with me that he could scarcely have imagined so peculiarly soft a complexion would have brightened into such brilliancy of colour."

And then the old gentleman spoke of "febrile symptoms," and strongly recommended the sending for Wilkins; and while the youthful chorus was asking, "Dearest papa, will you be so very good as to tell us what is meant by febrile symptoms?" the ladies hurried to the visitor's room, to investigate the matter more particularly ere desperate measures were resorted to.

They brought back a much less alarming report than Mrs. Martin had done. Miss Carew seemed languid, certainly, and out of spirits; but she was quite annoyed at the mention of a doctor: and as for her being too ill to go to Stukely, such an idea was utterly absurd.

"In fact," said Mrs. Grey, with a certain emphasis, "it would be a positive unkindness to press her staying here; for any one can see that the repose of that nice quiet little village will be the very thing for her."

Mr. Francis gave up harping upon the name of Wilkins: he could do no less; but, in an evil moment, asserted it was incumbent upon them all to be doubly solicitous about the health and welfare of so charming a person as their young cousin; whereupon Esther assured him she should be just as ready to send for a doctor to an ugly old woman, if she happened to be taken ill at their house, as to one that was young and pretty.

At the great house, where Mr. Francis shortly

betook himself, he found a far more ready sympathy. Mrs. Luttrell had been quite as much taken as himself with Carew's fair daughter, and would gladly have found in Selby's indisposition a pretext for keeping her longer amongst them.

"I don't know when I have been more interested in any young person," said she; "and if Esther finds the least inconvenience in receiving her just now, I shall be delighted to have her here. I may be deceived," she added; "but there is that about her that encourages me to hope I may make a friend—a real friend of her."

Mrs. Damer, who overheard this remark, smiled somewhat satirically at her daughter's enthusiasm. Not so Mr. Francis. A speech so unlike Esther's cavillings about "old women" jumped exactly with his humour; and he warmly received Mrs. Luttrell's offer of returning immediately with him, to visit the "sweet invalid," and give her opinion in the matter of Wilkins.

Prepossessed as they were in each other's favour, these two amiable and susceptible women must, in any case, have experienced a mutual attraction; but there was something in the concomitants of their interview—a freedom from form and ceremony, as they conversed alone in the darkened chamber of the supposed invalid—that was peculiarly calculated to help forward the familiar intercourse which both were so anxious to establish.

If the workings of her too expressive features had been liable to observation in open daylight, Selby would scarcely have dared to touch upon any sub-



ject of vital interest ; but now, trusting to the safe obscurity in which she lay shrouded, she could venture to pronounce the name of Hamilton without fearing that her change of countenance was attracting suspicion.

Up to this time, all Mrs. Luttrell's sweetness and cordiality had not sufficed to overcome the secret awe with which Selby regarded her mother-in-law ; but now she appeared to her in the light of a fellow-sufferer : vexed by the same cause, tormented by some portion at least of the feeling that agitated herself—the horror, disgust, and righteous wrath—there was not another being in the world, whose sentiments in this particular would have allowed any parallel with her own. And still the mother's chafing could bear little just comparison with the anguish of the wife : yet it was felt as a secret bond of union ; and in being able to pity the great Mrs. Luttrell, Selby lost much of her apprehension of that exalted personage.

With her natural penetration sharpened to the utmost by the difficulties of her position, she could plainly discern in Mrs. Luttrell's manner a certain well-bred surprise, at hearing the tone of censure in which this very recent acquaintance of hers (cousin, though she might be) thought fit to animadvert on the manners and deportment of one of the guests at Horton Hall ; but the irrepressible longing she experienced to elicit, if possible, something still more decisive with regard to Mrs. Hamilton, rendered her positively invulnerable to any such tacit reproof : it rather urged her to justify her seeming

impertinence, by explaining openly how it had been induced.

"She had heard a good deal about Mrs. Hamilton from Miss Marsham, and Mrs. Grey had told her much more; and she had been struck (nobody could help it) with the beauty of this lady, so wonderfully attractive as she was: and then her suffering husband; who could fail to be interested in him? She confessed," and she made the avowal, with what poor Selby meant to be only a sigh, but it sounded more like a sob, "she had thought of very little else all night. It did happen so sometimes: things apparently of no personal importance would take such a powerful hold of one's fancy."

In all this there was no allusion made to Hartley: that name she dared not introduce; and his mother, though vexed with the incautious tattling of "that foolish Fanny," could make great allowances for the lively interest which the Hamiltons had inspired in Miss Carew: delicately as that natural feeling was expressed, and in a tone so distinct from the indiscriminating curiosity of a vulgar mind. And then this sweet young woman saw everything in so proper a light, and discovered such a well-founded horror of the assailable points in Mrs. Hamilton's conduct. If she, a perfect stranger amongst them, and uninfluenced by any ulterior dread of the arts of this lady, condemned her immediately, how well did it justify Mrs. Luttrell's own aversion?

On the whole, the similarity of sentiment displayed by cousin John's daughter, did her no dis-

service in the eyes of her mother-in-law: even when she found reason to suspect, from her ready comprehension and melancholy sympathy, that the family secrets had been too rashly exposed to an uninterested person, she ceased to fear any mortifying consequences ensuing from Miss Carew being made their partial depository.

Perhaps, in her heart Mrs. Luttrell did not particularly regret the freedom of Fanny Marsham's communications. She had long desired the companionship of a sympathizing friend; one who would listen to her maternal anxieties with the respectful interest they seldom received from her friends in general: for at home, Mrs. Luttrell had the reputation of being over solicitous, or, in familiar phrase, "fidgety," on this as well as other points; and everybody connected with her made it a principle to discourage as much as possible all her exaggerated fears and nervous fancies. She soon began to ask herself, whether she could really be so fortunate as to have found, in this charming young cousin, the inestimable comfort after which she had yearned so long, yet so hopelessly?—a tender yet judicious friend, entering unaffectedly into all her feelings, and as candid in expressing her opinions as she was wise in forming them. Why should it not be so? And why, looking into those soft, intelligent eyes, should she distrust the open and honest sympathy they seemed to express?

That nothing on her own part might be wanting to accelerate and improve an intimacy so promising, she pressed Miss Carew to visit her at Horton,

as soon as she had completed her stay with the Wollastons; and Selby, whose most ardent desire it was to see and hear more of Mrs. Hamilton, and who was positively sickening at the prospect of leaving that neighbourhood in her present state of uncertainty, accepted the invitation without the pause of a single moment.

There had been a time when she would as unhesitatingly have refused the offer of bed and board within the precincts of Horton Hall: she would have been struck with the indelicacy of courting attentions under the name of Carew, which she was well assured would not have been vouchsafed her, supposing she had laid claim to her real denomination and place in society; but during the last twenty-four hours, her feelings had suffered a strange revolution: her heart and head were occupied with other things than questions of conventional propriety.

It was not till long after the invitation had been given and accepted, that it occurred to her to ask herself, how far she was justified in taking advantage of kindnesses intended for John Carew's daughter, and not for the wife of Captain Hartley Luttrell; but, with a very natural self-deceit, she argued, on the other hand, that it was a species of duty to satisfy herself of the truth or falsehood of the frightful hints that had reached her at Horton, and consequently that no idle scruple ought to prevent her returning thither as soon as she was bidden. In truth, her chief uneasiness soon arose from the apprehension of not being further solicited.

Selby little knew the lively impression she had made, on some of the family at least; the zeal in her cause evinced by Mrs. Luttrell and her brother-in-law being more than enough to neutralize Mrs. Damer's indifference, or the thorough dislike with which Esther regarded her new cousin. We must observe, however, that this aversion was very seldom openly declared; for it was grounded on personal or filial feelings, which she was far too discreet to disclose to anybody but Mrs. Grey; so that, except by a cold answer or a stony glance, she did little to check the exuberant admiration and tender interest which her father and aunt were delighted to lavish on this daughter of Charlotte Carew. The former especially—who, with all his boasted tact and penetration into character, was obtuse to the last degree in estimating that of his daughter—still sought to make her participate in his warm prepossession in favour of this “interesting young creature;” and took infinite pleasure in repeating, not merely his own praises of Miss Carew, but also those of the neighbourhood at large. Her appearance at church, he said, had excited a really surprising sensation; and in enumerating all the complimentary remarks which had subsequently come to his ears, he took care to cite those of their rector: whose position in the pulpit, being directly in front of the Lodge pew, gave him an unavoidable opportunity for scanning the features of their fair cousin.

“Mr. Goldwin is wonderfully struck with her,” said he; “and, between ourselves, quite smiles at Sir William's notion of her likeness to his first wife:

he remembers the first Lady Gascoigne perfectly, he tells me ; and though she was certainly accounted a beauty in her time, yet he is sure she never could have stood any comparison with our young relation. And, do you know, Esther, I can quite believe him."

"Can you, sir?"

"Yes, my love, I can ; for I have observed that our reverend friend, besides possessing a refined taste on ordinary matters, has a very quick eye for female beauty."

"I think he shewed *that* in his choice of a wife," said Mrs. Grey, raising her eyes for a moment from her book.

"Exactly so," said Mr. Francis.

"Mrs. Goldwin was a very lovely young woman when he first brought her to the rectory, and even now preserves great traces of her youthful looks—one seldom sees a woman wear better : yes ; our good rector's taste may be fairly trusted. Going farther than the garden, Esther?" he inquired, for Miss Luttrell, at this turn of the discourse, was quietly moving off.

"No," said she, coldly ; "only into the greenhouse : those new plants require more attention than I can persuade Walters to give them ;" and so she made her exit.

"Delightful occupation!" murmured the old gentleman, looking after her with a countenance of serene approval. "I reckon your sex especially fortunate, Mrs. Grey, in possessing so many pursuits which afford a mechanical employment to the

fingers, while at the same time they give full scope for the thoughts to wander at will amongst a thousand agreeable fancies. In all the elegant amusements of you fair ladies, and gardening amongst the number, there is a certain object in view—a feeling, as it were, of business going on ; while you are, in fact, thinking of subjects altogether irrelevant—meditating, perhaps, many a kindly scheme for the benefit of others, or feeding the fancy with poetical images. Memory, too, that source of so much pleasure, how many opportunities lie open to you at these times of safely indulging it—memory, the parent of sweet thoughts and soothing melancholy. I take melancholy, you perceive, my dear madam, not in its common acceptation, but rather as it occurs in our older writers ; for we moderns have sadly corrupted its original meaning, impressing it with an austerity ungrateful to the mind.”

Mr. Francis stopping just then, and seeming to expect an answer—a something of assent or negation, to intimate that he had not been soliloquizing unawares—Mrs. Grey looked at him over her spectacles, and with one finger resolutely fixed on the page of her book, wherewith to mark the interesting passage then under perusal (it was about the middle of the third chapter of the last volume of the *Mysterious Freebooter*), said, with a vacant smile,—

“ Yes, as you say, sir ; just so ! Oh, dear ! by no means—it would not surprise me at all.”

Luckily Mr. Francis had not time to inquire what it was in his discourse that was incapable of surprising Mrs. Grey, for he remembered having

promised to give his children a lesson on astronomy that morning ; and so he departed to the school-room, and relieved his old friend from a disquisition which seemed fast verging towards metaphysics.

Had the fair Carew been still an inmate of Horton Lodge, it is probable that the young people might not that morning have been so duly attended to ; but while this conversation was proceeding, she was some miles off, on her way to Stukely—that serene little spot of earth, which, in the benignity of childish recollections, she had been used to talk of as “ dear, nice, good old Stukely ! ” But now, with every source of interest, every hope and inclination bound up within the precincts of Horton Hall, the village to which she was hastening had lost much of its attraction in her eyes ; and sorely indeed would the kind-hearted Wollastons have been disappointed, could they have surmised but half the reluctance with which their young friend was approaching them.

They, full of pleasant anticipation and hospitable intentions, had been long watching for her arrival—they, and all their household ; for visitors are rare at the vicarage, and the servants, on this occasion, partake of the excitement of their master and mistress. We speak not particularly of Thomas the footman, who having been desired to be on the look-out, takes it as a matter of business, and thereupon grumbles so audibly, that his mistress conveys herself out of his vicinity, lest, hearing him too distinctly, she should be obliged to say “ something sharp to Thomas ; ” but besides the gardener and



his boy, who, acting with the cheerful alacrity of volunteers, have each an eye to the road, there is Benjamin, who runs of errands ; and there is also, in addition to the ordinary establishment, old Mrs. Jenkins, who has just called in to fetch the clothes for the wash ; and who, with the rest of the village, being conversant in the state of affairs, has directed her grandson, Jemmy, to keep a very sharp look-out at the end of the lane, and run for his life to give notice at the vicarage the moment a chaise appears in view.

For upwards of an hour, however, these preparations have been made in vain, and solemn thoughts are beginning to be entertained ; nay, Mrs. Wollaston is taking counsel thereupon with Mary the cook upon the expediency of putting back dinner for another half hour ; when, at the moment they are conferring, Jemmy, the outpost, like another elfin page, raises his long, lean arm on high ; the watchers in general catch the signal, and there is a simultaneous movement discernible amongst them.

Then the vicar himself, putting his head within the kitchen doorway, says, “ Kitty—Mrs. Wollaston, my dear, I think I hear a carriage on the road.”

“ I will be with you directly, my dear Mr. Wollaston,” is the ready reply ; “ and now, cook, you may proceed without fear of overdoing the duck ;” and, with only once turning back to add a word or two about “ that little matter of fricassee,” the old lady hurries to join her husband, and they shuffle off together towards the garden-gate as fast as corns and slight touches of rheumatism will allow ; each

most grotesque countenance, beaming as it does with good humour and pleasing anticipation.

In all the world you could scarcely have found two more excellent persons than the vicar and vicaress of Stukely; nor would it have been possible to discover a couple more thoroughly and undeniably ugly: the old gentleman's visage was of a long, thin cast of frightfulness, while that of his lady inclined to the square; and in the features of each there was a queerness and absence of all human proportion, such as we seldom see to the same degree in anything but the masks and water-spouts of some ancient cathedral.

In one respect, indeed, the comparison does them injustice; for in those strange freaks of the Gothic chisel, some wickedness of expression is pretty sure to lurk: a worldly leer, or a jibing sarcasm, at the least; whilst the uncouth features of the Wollastons displayed only the benevolence and good feeling which reigned in every thought and action of their lives. And while describing their personal appearance, it will be as well to observe that, whatever the world in general might think of it, as regarded their estimation of each other, no lack of symmetry had ever been discovered.

They had married early in life, from motives of true, unadulterated affection: an impulse which they themselves were fond to characterize as "love at first sight;" and, although judging by appearances, the fact was found difficult of belief by even their best friends and warmest admirers, the well-known veracity of both parties prevented the asser-

tion from being seriously impugned. Besides, the idea was not presented in the form of a cold and dry abstraction, and the hearer left to account for it after any fashion he might choose; it was sure to be embellished with many a minute and picturesque circumstance, sufficient to warm the coldest auditor and persuade the most incredulous.

The vicar especially delighted to expatiate on the nature of his feelings when, for the first time, he beheld "my dear Mrs. Wollaston, then Miss Kitty Finch, sitting at tea under an arbour of honeysuckle; when I happened (by the merest chance, as it might appear, though now we perceive there was a purpose in it—most evidently a purpose!)"—when I happened, I say, to call in just to inquire after the health of Mr. and Mrs. Atwood—mutual friends of ours, with whom my Kitty was spending a few days."

If I remember aright, Sir Walter Scott, in his delightful critique on the novels of Richardson, censures that author for having caused Lovelace to describe, with excessive particularity, the dress in which the divine Clarissa appears on the fatal night of their elopement: he (Sir Walter) thinks it unlikely that in a moment of such overwhelming excitement, the libertine lover should condescend to take note of his mistress's breast-knot or shoe-buckles. Yet the vicar's example would go far to vindicate this passage of the novelist; for, while dwelling on the emotions of this most interesting moment of his life, he seldom failed to particularize, minutely, the fly-cap, à la française, which Miss Finch wore

that evening, or the little flounced apron which adorned her rose-coloured paduasoy.

In Mrs. Wollaston's manner of narrating the incident—she being a far more sensible person than her husband—it lost much of its picturesqueness, and a good deal of its absurdity; for though she, no doubt, treasured in her “heart's remotest cell” the smallest circumstance of that eventful tea-drinking, she would simply observe, “No sooner was I happy enough to be introduced to Mr. Wollaston, than I experienced a certain conviction, that, unless I had the great good fortune to attract his esteem, I should remain single to the end of my life!”

And truly, if such was to have been the result of any want of due reciprocation of tenderness on the part of the vicar, happy was it for the village of Stukely that he made his choice so quickly and so well: and thrice happy for the good man himself; for where, excepting in the fair and frightful possessor of that fly-cap and rose-coloured paduasoy, would he have “lighted” on a lady so entirely devoted to him? one who would so have cherished—we had almost said worshipped him, for every quality, real or presumed, of mind and person.

Never let us, in the obtuseness of our worldly wisdom, fall out with Cupid because his eyes are muffled, but rather let us wish the bandage three-fold thicker than it is; for ten to one but in those blinkers lies the grand secret of our domestic happiness. The strange but fortunate illusion which had caused the Wollastons to seem handsome in each other's eyes on their first meeting, was never dis-

turbed by any untoward suspicion of the truth ; and they kept on in the same faith to the end of their career, esteeming each other as the best and wisest of human beings.

On the side of the vicar, this perfect satisfaction in the companion of his life seemed reasonable enough ; for on all subjects free from conjugal delusions, Mrs. Wollaston was an acute, well-judging person : but that *she* should persevere, during every moment of the forty-five years she had passed with her husband, in upholding him as the pattern and model for all his sex—that she should still listen to his feeble talk, and account it wisdom in the garb of vivacity ; or hear his sermons every Sunday of her life, and continue treasuring up each bald, disjointed homily, as something judicious, forcible, pathetic, or sublime ; this was the conjugal enigma never to be solved—the really unaccountable part of the mystery : and had in it, we must confess, a very strong dash of the absurd. And yet there was so much that was truly admirable, mixed up with the ludicrous in Mrs. Wollaston's character, that you could hardly help respecting the very weaknesses that made you smile.

The most satirical observer might have been struck with her unselfish ways : her very individuality seemed absorbed in that of her husband. Everybody, but herself, was aware that almost all the benevolent institutions for which the parish of Stukely was celebrated in the county were originated by her active mind and habits of business : it was through her management that funds had been raised

for building the new school-house, the plan of which she had chosen and improved upon; it was she who had called attention to the dilapidated condition of the church-tower; and had, in fact, been the first to insinuate, under cover of the vicar's name, the idea of the County Hospital, which was now in so flourishing a condition. Then the village Benefit Club—did it not look, in reality, to her as its foun-dress? and the blanket societies, and all the annual distributions—the coals and the soup, red cloaks and flannel petticoats—how would these, and a hundred things besides, have been done, had they been left to the actual instead of nominal superintendence of the self-sufficient, procrastinating vicar?

Yet never, even in thought, did his wife appropriate the merit of her exertions: after considering and devising, writing letters and calculating expenses, lavishing her time, energy, and money, upon plans for the good of his parishioners, still, sunflower-wise, would she turn to him, her Magnus Apollo, with looks of gratitude and respectful admiration; praising him for his unceasing exertions, and beseeching him to spare himself a little, and take, for her sake, a more reverend care of his precious health. And then to see how the good vicar accepted all the compliments his wife was pleased to pay him,—with what modest exultation he observed the various useful and benevolent schemes that were so steadily progressing around him; with humble complacency returning thanks for the good *he* had been enabled to do, and resolv-

ing that, for the time to come, he would abide by Mrs. Wollaston's advice, and take things a little more quietly, and not suffer himself to be quite overpowered with business. Thus perfect in its satisfaction was the delusion of their love ; and, spite of the occasional ridicule that might attach to it, it threw over the waning autumn of their years the pleasant freshness of an April morning.

The warmest display of hospitality and affection was lavished upon Selby by these two excellent people ; who, ever since her first visit to them, had cherished the remembrance of her childish beauty and sweet disposition : and she, when in the desolation of her heart she had believed herself incapable of taking comfort, had done that disposition less than justice. The utmost sullenness of a mind so open to every good impression as was hers, could not long remain proof against the reception she met with at Stukely.

The first salutations over, she had to hear much of the disturbance and alarm her old friends had experienced at not seeing her on the Saturday evening : how they had waited in vain, and had despatched scouts for three or four miles along the Bath road to learn if any accident had befallen her chaise ; and then, sending their servants to bed, had sat up themselves half the night, conjecturing and grieving, and fearing that the next day would bring some awful tidings of the Bath coach.

“ But Mr. Luttrell's genteel attention in sending us that kind little note next morning, settled everything, and set us quite to rights again. We found it

waiting for us on our return from church, and truly joyful were we to find the good news it contained ; for, of course, when we heard *where* our dear Miss Carew was situated—safely and honourably situated—oh ! then all was right ! quite as it should be—was it not so, Mr. Wollaston ?”

Selby, in exonerating herself from inattention to their feelings, did all she could to excuse her father’s strange behaviour.

“ He was so anxious to introduce me to his relations at Horton ; and, as he was quite persuaded that nothing would induce me to go amongst them of my own accord, he directed the postboy without my knowledge, and literally took me to the very gates of the park before I could guess where I was.”

It is not to be supposed that the Wollastons, so correct in their own deportment, so considerate of other people, should be able frankly to approve of the free and easy proceedings of John Carew ; but to his daughter they made the best of that which was plainly inexcusable, and dwelt only upon what may be termed the picturesque points of the transaction.

“ Dear, dear ! Well, it was a curious incident : and, no doubt, your good father had his reasons. Singular, indeed ! Was it not, Mr. Wollaston ?”

“ Truly remarkable ! as you say, my dear Kitty.”

“ Yet there was something pretty in it, to my mind. You agree with me, I think, Mr. Wollaston ?—a something, not altogether prudent perhaps,



but what will be long remembered, and serve for much pleasing discourse in time to come. And then to reflect how every way agreeable the surprise must have been to your friends at Horton Hall: for we cannot but presume that they were charmed to make you welcome."

"Yes; indeed, they were most kind."

"No doubt—no doubt of it at all: there needs no assurance on that head."

And the two old people joined their voices, and shook their heads in unison; plainly signifying by their looks, that so pretty a creature must needs find favour wherever chance or a hair-brained father might lead her.

And let it not be held as a serious blemish in the character of poor Selby, when we acknowledge how much her spirits were raised by this impartial tribute to her beauty: it was the brightest gleam that had dawned upon her since her late tribulations. Tormented as she was with the ever-recurring recollection of Mrs. Hamilton's glowing charms, and fretting under a sense of her own inferiority, she was in a temper to welcome the smallest compliment to her personal appearance. It was the sole balm for her wounded vanity: the only present comfort she could receive; and, with a quick and happy perception that she was fulfilling the Wollastons' warmest expectations of her, she observed the complacent looks which puckered the wrinkles in those two withered faces, impressing on them an aspect of more than ordinary benignity. Such signs of honest admiration were calculated to do her far more good

than the more substantial benefits they were equally ready to bestow ; for, struck, as it seemed, by the same idea, she had scarcely entered the house before they reminded each other that she must be hungry.

Amongst many old-fashioned notions, carried out to their fullest extent at the vicarage, was that one which supposes that a guest, of whatever age or sex it may be, must, in its visitorial character, possess a double capacity for food : young people, more particularly, were always presumed to be in a craving state, and were crammed accordingly.

“ Lips, though blooming, must still be fed,” says Tommy Moore ; and the Wollastons delighted in acting on the maxim. It was an amiable anomaly in their character, that, being themselves indifferent to the pleasures of the table, and invariably sparing in diet, they should still take such unfeigned pleasure in stuffing a friend ; so in this case, breaking off all minor civilities, they hastened to enlarge on this supreme rite of hospitality.

“ Something by way of a luncheon, my dear Miss Carew : we are persuaded you must be in need of it. We had hoped to have seen you as early as our little mid-day repast ; but the claims of relationship were to be attended to in the first place. Of that we were fully aware ; and so, concluding how agreeably and properly you were detained, Mr. Wollaston and I took our little bit of plain cake shortly after twelve, quite alone ; but not ever grumbling at that : no, indeed ; quite the contrary. And with regard to that, I must be understood to be

speaking of myself alone; for Mr. Wollaston never repines at anything: he is incapable of an impatient murmur."

Which last little observation was uttered in a lower tone, as if Mrs. Wollaston was repeating to herself some indisputable fact, which the world itself, not to mention the company present, were unable to contradict.

The vicar, in the mean time, kept accompanying her with a word or two of assent: "Yes—yes—just so—no doubt of it, Mrs. Wollaston—precisely so, my dear Kitty." Nor would he have objected to engrossing a larger portion of the talk, had it fallen to his share; but this was one of the very, v-e-r-y few points on which he occasionally failed in getting his own way,—one of the infinitesimal doses of self-denial which, connubially speaking, he had now and then to swallow: with all her respect for his talents, and delight in hearing him talk, it did sometimes require a little manœuvring, on the vicar's part, before he could succeed in breaking the thread of Mrs. Wollaston's discourse.

Selby tried to evade their hospitable efforts, on the plea that they dined early; but that assertion was mildly corrected.

"No, not early: never before three o'clock," and that day it would be more than an hour later; "and you confess you have had nothing since breakfast, so a mouthful or two more will revive you extremely—a little bit of cold chicken. Is not that your opinion, Mrs. Wollaston?"

"No doubt of it, Mr. Wollaston; and a morsel of

tongue, by way of relish: the tray is quite ready, and we have only to ring the bell."

"Which I will do with pleasure, my dear Kitty."

"By no means, Mr. Wollaston, that office shall, if you please, be mine;" and, dropping a slight curtsy as she passed her husband, the old lady shuffled across the hearth, and rang the bell.

Selby vainly interposed,—“Indeed, ma’am, it is giving such unnecessary trouble: I assure you, I can eat nothing.”

“Not eat!” cried the vicar, vivaciously, “how? young and blooming, and not eat:—fie, fie, that must not be, that must not be; and as for trouble, we think nothing of trouble in this house,—do we, my dear Kitty? We don’t allow anything to be regarded in that light; least of all, the due entertainment of a friend—we or our servants either. Thomas—our Thomas, you know, is strong and active, and knows our ways, and never thinks anything a trouble,—does he, Mrs. Wollaston?”

“Dear me, no, Mr. Wollaston! he knows himself too well for that—much too well!”

Then, turning to the very cross-looking man who answered the bell, she gave him her orders; and, as he shut the door after him with a kind of inward growl, meant to signify that he would do his mistress the favour she required at his hands, she repeated her commendation of him.

“No, indeed! Thomas knows himself a great deal too well for that,—all that sort of thing has long been over with Thomas.”

Now, what “the sort of thing” might be which

was said to be "over with Thomas," Selby was, for the present, left to guess ; but it was not long after taking up her abode at the vicarage that she discovered it to be one of Mrs. Wollaston's peculiarities to believe—and expect everybody else to believe it also—that this churlish footman of theirs had undergone a thorough reformation, and been cured of all his disagreeable ways, through the timely admonition and judicious treatment of his master.

"No one," she would say, "let him be ever so ungainly, but must be improved by living under the same roof with Mr. Wollaston. You would hardly now suppose what a very unprepossessing manner Thomas had with him when he first came to live with us ; and Mr. Wollaston, I really think, would have parted with him, clever as he is in his department : but I never despaired of him. I was entirely convinced that a very few weeks, under such a master as Mr. Wollaston, would make quite another creature of him ; so I interceded for a little longer trial, and Mr. Wollaston was kind enough to listen to me (he is always so indulgent!) ; and now," appealing triumphantly to her audience, "you see what Thomas has become !"

As the Wollastons had not communicated (except by letter) with the Carews, since the unexpected re-appearance of the head of that family, it was a subject open to much inquiry and remark : especially with the vicar, who was of an inquisitive, gossiping turn, and always got at the private scandal of the village much sooner than his wife ; so Selby had, before long, to relate as much of her father's adven-

tures as she was mistress of herself: but had, in conclusion, the mortification to perceive that she did not, by any means, succeed in satisfying their appetite for the wonderful. It was only something very extraordinary indeed that could account, to the right-minded Wollaston, for the mysterious conduct of John Carew: they had searched all the newspapers of the period that fell in their way, supposing his history might even be remarkable enough to find its way into their columns; and, during the intervals of parish superintendence, vague ideas would still be floating through their ancient but far from dull imaginations, of certain wandering and navigating characters which they had read of in their youthful days—such as Captain Cook and Robinson Crusoe; and the influence of these roving fancies might be traced in the wistful gaze with which, looking up into Selby's face, they hinted delicately their expectation that something relating to a "desolate island," must still be forthcoming.

Had Carew only been there in person to recount his own experience, there is little doubt that their craving for the marvellous would have been thoroughly gratified; but to his daughter, more conscientious or less informed, it was a relief when the entrance of Thomas the reformed, with the luncheon-tray, put an end to their interrogations. True, it was but changing one dilemma for another of a different species; if she stopped talking, she must eat; and in the softness of her nature, she had at one critical moment been on the very point of giving in to their solicitations, when it occurred to her, that if the

cramming system was so zealously acted upon at this inferior meal, their endeavours during the higher solemnities of dinner would be yet more strenuous; and so much the greater would be the discomfiture of her old friends, should she then seem to play the fine lady, and refuse to take a proper share of the savoury dishes, whose odour was so undeniable whenever the parlour-door was opened. So, trusting she consulted the true interest of all parties by reserving and husbanding her powers for future exertion, she steadily resisted every present offer of refreshment.

Upon this a walk was presently proposed. "She must, if agreeable, take a stroll down the village, and see if she remembered the old place; *she*," it was said with kind emphasis, "was still remembered there:" and Selby's conscience smote her at the words, for how little had she thought of Stukely and these good people, and how purely selfish had been her motives in coming to see them again!

As an atonement for past neglect, she promised herself to be most grateful and attentive for the time to come; and then, in the bitter spirit in which all things now appeared to her, she wondered if she should be able to keep her resolution. How dared she reckon upon the future, or fancy herself a free agent, with power to choose or reject a single associate? she, bound as it were hand and foot: the property of another!

Such were her reflections, the offspring of jealousy and mistrust, as Selby crossed the threshold of that peaceful dwelling. Its mistress, happily ignorant of

what was passing in the mind of her beautiful guest, lingered a moment behind to send Thomas with a message to the kitchen: an order that dinner might be served as soon as ready, as Miss Carew would be getting faint for want of refreshment.

The vicar, overhearing this direction, remarked upon it with something of a condescending air; which he was guilty of assuming now and then, when sanctioning any independent suggestion of his wife's.

"Well thought of, Mrs. Wollaston! very well remembered—yes, yes, after rambling about a little, we shall all feel disposed for our dinner."

Selby devoutly hoped his words might be verified in her case: but the incitement to appetite, the walk which she had been promised, seemed likely to be a failure; for just as they reached the garden-gate, they were followed by Thomas, who grumbled forth an intimation that Hobbes (the parish clerk) was waiting in the kitchen to speak to master: and the interruption, untimely as it might be reckoned, occurred in a form so strictly professional, that it demanded immediate attention.

The vicar, indeed, somewhat childishly bent on his walk down the village, was for deferring the conference: "Well, well, Thomas, give the old man something to eat and drink, and I will see him on my return;" but his far more efficient viceroy, ever at hand to do the right thing in small matters as well as great, here stepped forward.

"You are quite right not to think of turning back, my dear Mr. Wollaston: if you will continue



to conduct Miss Carew, I will, myself, just step and speak to Peter; for it is probably only some trifling matter of the old man's—some little question that may come within the scope of my poor ability."

"Probably it may, Kitty," was the vicar's condescending reply: and away the old lady shuffled, to do his business for him. Then, as Selby and he stood at the little green gate—for in the spirit of the good old days of the rose-coloured paduasoy, the old gentleman never dreamed of going out without Mrs. Wollaston—he proceeded to comment on his inferior satellite in much the same tone with which Dogberry held forth on the merits of Verges. "Hobbes—Hobbes—ah, yes! you can scarcely remember Hobbes, I think, Miss Carew?"

"Indeed I do, sir; unless he is quite altered, I should know the old man anywhere."

"Ah, really! what Hobbes? really! Well now, Peter ought to feel much honoured when he hears (which he soon shall do) that he is held in the memory of such a young lady: dear me, ha, ha! We old fellows, you see, make a lasting impression sometimes. Very good, very good! I shall repeat that to Mrs. Wollaston anon. But as I was observing, Hobbes—yes Hobbes is a bad name: a bad name in itself; notwithstanding which, I assure you our Peter is neither an atheist (God forbid!) nor yet a philosopher. No, no, Hobbes is nothing of either kind, or he would not have filled his office here so long in honour and respect. Peter Hobbes is getting into years now (as is the case with many of us), and he has the little foibles peculiar to his

age and station—a certain amount of self-sufficiency ; which, however, Mrs. Wollaston is good enough to say does not altogether displease her: it is her maxim that no parish clerk is ever zealous in his calling without a portion of self-conceit—that is her idea ; so you see Peter's foibles even have their champion : his good qualities may speak for themselves. Not but what, Miss Carew, there are times and seasons when we feel ourselves called upon to check him. But we do it gently—we do it gently—for our Hobbes is a worthy creature on the whole, and between ourselves,” and the vicar spoke low and looked significantly, “ would be still better without his wife. All married ladies, you know, are not like Mrs. Wollaston, ha, ha !”

His lovely companion here turned upon him a look of deeper sentiment than the subject seemed to warrant, as she answered him :—

“ No, indeed, sir ; nor are husbands in general so kindly ready to acknowledge the merit of their wives as Mr. Wollaston.”

“ Dear, dear !” said the old gentleman, all smiles and puckers in a moment, “ well now, that was a charming reply ! Most agreeably said indeed ! Mrs. Wollaston should not be missing just now, she should be at hand to participate in the compliments we are bandying, worded as they are with such elegant perspicuity : she should be present, should she not ? But you must not be waiting here ; I must take you to see our improvements in the back premises. You have much to see there ! Many alterations of a material nature have taken place,

especially this spring; the outer scullery newly paved in April, and now we are having a little whitewash: I call it assisting our complexion—ha, ha! Allow me to precede you, and open the gate. I think we shall surprise Mrs. Wollaston; she will think we have eloped together.”

“It would not be the first time I have played hide-and-seek here,” said Selby, whose spirits were much excited as she looked round upon so many mementoes of her innocent and happy childhood.

But, luckily, the vicar was so absorbed in his own way, that she had time to recover herself before he had stumbled up the gravel-walk, or described one-half of his improvements. To Selby it seemed that the garden and its surrounding buildings looked exactly as they had often done: it was only this that touched her feelings; but she would not have hinted such a thing on any account, having been brought thither for the express purpose of admiring improvements. She afforded, therefore, the required attention, while her old friend pointed out to her the great things that had been done; the raising the washhouse-wall in this direction, and the two feet of ground which had been taken in from the paddock in that.

“That last improvement was quite a suggestion of my own: the idea had not struck Mrs. Wollaston, though she is seldom backward in starting judicious schemes; but this had escaped her penetrating observation. I need not say she was ready to accede to it; with her customary graceful promptitude she acknowledged its propriety at a glance.

And then you observe that the gable end of the house has been faced with slating—a wonderful improvement also,—and—and three—yes three new chimney-pots;” and having at this point reached at once the height of his self-gratulation, and the extreme top of the vicarage, the old gentleman stopped to take breath, and trace the effect of all these changes on the face of his companion. Hearing the garden-gate unlatched, however, he began again: —“ Ha, here comes Mrs. Wollaston, escaped in good time from Peter.”

“ No long controversy, then, with Hobbes to-day,” said Selby.

“ Ha, ha ! very good ! No controversy, as you say, with the philosopher ; excellently remarked, indeed ! neatly turned, and very witty ! But I think there has been no lack of brilliancy in our dialogue. Yes, yes, we flatter ourselves we have shone not a little this morning. Ah, Mrs. Wollaston, my dear, you have lost many good things : while you have been prosing, shall I say ? or coquetting, was it, with Peter Hobbes ? Miss Carew and I have been keeping up the ball of conversation, and bandying jests and compliments, with great spirit, indeed.”

“ Dear, dear ! ” said the vicareess, her face growing more benevolently grotesque as she hobbled up the walk to meet them ; “ but you will allow me to be a partaker ? Surely there may be a repetition for my advantage.”

“ I scarcely think it—I scarcely think there may ; the spirit of repartee forbids a repetition. As I remember an ingenious friend once observing, the

ethereal particles of a bon-mot fly off when twice distilled. Well, and so you have despatched our good friend Peter. Nothing very important in his business, I apprehend, as I was not summoned to the conference?"

"Oh, dear! Of no sort of moment: not at all worthy of *your* attention—(this was uttered in a tone of respect for his time and abilities, bordering on veneration)—merely a little matter which was quite within my compass. I shall step down the village in the evening, and settle it in a quarter of an hour."

"Well, perhaps you may; perhaps you may. And speaking of that (if Miss Carew will excuse our conferring about local matters), I'll ask you just to look in at the cottage by the turnpike—it is but a short way down the road; and see how Graves is going on; and whether his wife makes any complaint of him since the last outbreak. Oh, my dear, and Barnes,—well thought of! Yes, Barnes, you'll look in on poor Barnes, and do what is needful; and the recipe for Susan Gibbons,—good old Susan, the little prescription must not be forgotten."

The old lady, as her respected lord issued these commands (or rather commandings, for a diminutive is here sadly wanted), peered up in his face with that smile which rendered her plain features so pleasant to look upon.

"*You* forget nothing, dear Mr. Wollaston, that can benefit others," said she: "but the fact is, knowing your solicitude about these poor folks, I ventured

to forestal your directions, and so called at those very places, amongst a few others, this morning ; but being a good deal taken up with the expectation of seeing our dear Miss Carew, I foolishly omitted mentioning to you that I had done so, which was careless of me."

" Called there? called this morning? Bless me! why, what was I doing all the time? "

" My dear Mr. Wollaston, you were far better engaged: you were busied in your study, and of course I would not interrupt you to mention my trifling arrangements. But speaking of Hobbes, he told me something in the course of his gossip which I am sure you will be pleased to hear."

The old gentleman interrupted her with a facetious simper.

" What! then you acknowledge your long talk to have been only gossip? fie, fie! gossiping with Peter. Too bad, too bad, by far! But you may tell us his news notwithstanding. Peter's bon-mots, I venture to predict, will *not* suffer from repetition."

This was said very archly.

" It relates to Martha Grindall, my dear Mr. Wollaston."

" Poor old Martha! really, really! well, and how goes on the rheumatism? "

" Still sadly, I am sorry to say: but her nephew is quite cured of his bad wound, and has given up all idea of the army; and through the interest of some kind friend,—a great lady, Peter said it was; but that is probably one of Hobbes's mistakes—at

all events, by means of good recommendation, he has got an excellent place ; quite a superior situation, Peter says it is : and you know he was always a clever boy, long before he took this soldiering whim into his head. Yes, he is to go soon on trial to some gentleman in Suffolk ; that is, he is to return with him when his master leaves the friends whom he is now visiting somewhere in Warwickshire, near Horton Hall, I think ; and his name—dear me ! that I should have forgotten it so soon : but he is in the church—yes, a clergyman, and most highly respected, Peter tells me, and—dear, what was the name ? the Rev. Mr. ——”

“ Schofield, Kitty ? ”

“ No, not Schofield ; it began, I think, with an M.”

“ Bird, perhaps ? ” the vicar judiciously suggested. “ One of the Birds of Cravenshaw, I dare say.”

“ No, my dear Mr. Wollaston, it is no one belonging to these parts, or even my poor memory might serve me. No, it was a name not familiar to me ; odd, and not altogether English in the sound, and certainly it began with an M.”

“ It was not Mauleverer, was it ? ” said Selby.

“ Dear me, yes, that was the very name—yes, the Rev. Mr. Mauleverer, of some place in Suffolk, which Hobbes could not recall. But do you know him, my dear Miss Carew ? Is he a friend of yours ? ”

“ Oh, no ; far from it,” exclaimed Selby, somewhat too hastily. “ I know but little of him, and like him still less.”

"What! anything objectionable?" asked the vicar, looking grave and inquisitive. "Not altogether what he should be?"

"Oh," said Selby, half ashamed of her warmth, "he may be a very good man for aught I can tell; my dislike extends merely to his manner. I met him at dinner at the Hall, and he made himself rather unpleasant to me," and she could not forbear a little expressive shudder at the recollection of his ill-directed irony.

"Really!" said the vicar. "Indiscreet in his attentions? Too forward, perhaps?"

"No, indeed, sir, quite the reverse of that," said Selby, laughing and blushing a little at this misconstruction of her words.

"The reverse of that," repeated the old gentleman, growing now quite scandalized. "What, the reverse of attentive? *Not* sufficiently polite? Dear, dear! can such a thing be possible where Miss Carew is concerned? What! a gentleman by birth and education, and in orders too, and rude to a lady! Oh, fie!"

Selby had little calculated on the torrent of grave reprehension which was to follow her unguarded censure of Mrs. Hamilton's brother; she tried to explain that there was no ill-breeding towards herself personally; but he had spoken (here she grew very red), had alluded to an absent friend of hers in a way that had pained and hurt her: with which short explanation she meant to dismiss the subject, but both her old friends, upon that, burst forth with the liveliest indignation.



"How ! speak ill of an absent friend of the lady he was sitting beside, and feigning to entertain. Oh, that was very bad ! nothing but his being young, *very* young, and raw from college, could palliate such conduct."

They even doubted whether he could have been to either of the universities, or had any legal right to affix the "reverend" to his name ; thought, in conclusion, that Hobbes had made some egregious blunder, and were sorry that Tom Hodges was going into any such place.

"How strange it is," said Selby, "that the names about here should all sound so familiar to me, though it is so many years since I can have heard them !"

"Ah, you remember Hobbes," said the vicar. "My dear Kitty, Miss Carew is kind enough to recollect our Peter ; the old man must be told of it : it will please him much."

"Well, that is very sweet in her ! so entirely pretty !" But even as they spoke, it occurred to Selby that the name of Hodges was not associated with Stukely ; other thoughts came floating across her as it sounded in her ear : impressions of sunny days and balmy breezes, green banks and bowery lanes, where the song of the thrush and the nightingale had sounded sweeter than anywhere else ; for they had served as accompaniments to a voice far dearer to her than all the finches of the grove put together. She could not be mistaken, Tom Hodges was the name of Luttrell's regimental servant, when the — was quartered at Plymouth.

For a moment or two, she indulged in a lively reminiscence of the time thus suddenly forced upon her ; and she seemed to be hearing Hartley say, as he had done so often when any little errand was to be done—some book or song to be sent for from his lodging or the neighbouring town,—“Oh, Tom shall do that;” or, “I’ll send Hodges with it early to-morrow.”

But it was seldom permitted to poor Selby to revel long in such pleasant dreaming of the past: there was ever to be some drawback to her sweetest ruminations, where the remembrance of her husband was concerned ; and she was shortly recalled to a sense of insecurity, if not of danger, in being subjected to the recognition and possible remark of any one who had been privy to her early intimacy with Hartley Luttrell: supposing—and from various circumstances she thought it but too likely—that this should prove to be the very Tom Hodges,—Cupid’s special messenger,—the flying post of Quin’s Folly.

A question or two, with which she immediately assailed her unsuspicious old friends, satisfied her that there was no present fear of encountering this man in the neighbourhood of Stukely ; but while she comforted herself thus far, she could not but think it an untoward accident that had called up these alarming reflections. It was hard, indeed, that she could not spend one hour, even at quiet little Stukely, without hearing mention of some name connected with the most agitating and important transactions of her life. “But such,” she peni-

tently concluded,—“such must be the inevitable consequence of concealment and duplicity.”

Highly, indeed, as Selby had been disposed to estimate the advantages of her change of residence from Bath to Stukely, she found it, on farther acquaintance, less suited to her present circumstances than she had expected. Her introduction to the Luttrels, and the possibility, daily recurring, of having her intercourse with them in some way or other renewed, deprived her of much of that tranquillity she had so coveted; and which she had believed herself so certain to enjoy at this quiet country place.

There were moments of depression, too, when the mere sight of so much worth and happiness constantly before her, carried with it a continual though tacit reproach; and in her esteem and fondness for her old friends, there occurred many a sharp compunctious pang at the deceit she was practising on them. Sometimes she thought she had better have stayed amongst the artificial frivolities of Bath: her self-reproach would not have been half so often excited, as in the simple place where all was openness and integrity; and where married life appeared in so estimable and happy an aspect, that the contrast to it presented by her own uncertain fate became more striking and humiliating.

Many a peculiarity in the character and conduct of the Wollastons,—their exalted opinion of each other, the little compliments passing between them, and the almost Siamese-twinship of their insepara-

bility,—to Selby, who might once have found a subject of ridicule in such evidence of untiring love, they now seemed more affecting than absurd: could she have hoped in the decline of life, when youth and beauty were gone for ever, to be so cherished, and still admired, and made the subject of every kind thought and wish, how happy would she have been! It might on the whole have been better for her, had circumstances forced her more continually to smooth her brow and affect a cheerfulness she did not feel: but the vicar and his lady (especially the latter) had always a world of parochial business on their hands; and, in the mean while, their dear Miss Carew was left to the dangerous liberty of indulging her thoughts, undisturbed by considerations of social propriety.

The vicinity of the vicarage was rural and pleasing, and possessed that perfect seclusion she had so often desired; and here on every fine day she used to wander with old Rover, the Wollastons' favourite dog, for her sole companion. She remembered him a puppy during her first acquaintance with the vicarage, and in those happy days much fun had they had together; but now his handsome coat was flecked with grey, the light of one eye had totally departed, and he was slightly paralytic. Nevertheless, the old dog loved still to hobble along the paths he used once to bound over so lightly; and his lovely young friend, soon beginning to understand his ways, was no less indulgent of them than the rest of his household: often stopping in her walk because Rover required a rest,

or helping him over such brooks and bad places as the old fellow could not have crossed without such friendly assistance.

Selby would cheerfully have done as much from sincere regard to the species of which Rover was so respectable a member, but her attention to him was more than rewarded by the pleasure it afforded his master and mistress : not that there seemed to them anything remarkable in a creature on two legs being civil and well-bred to one upon four, and they estimated their visitor much too highly to suspect her of being deficient in that tenderness towards the brute creation, without which no human being can be truly amiable ; but they loved to find additional grace in all Selby's good qualities, and in their rather antiquated phraseology they eulogised her "sweet condescension" to poor old Rover, and discovered that through these healthy walks his left leg had considerably more action in it than before Miss Carew's arrival.

## CHAPTER VII.

From the state of brooding melancholy into which Selby had fallen, she was roused by the receipt of a letter from Hartley, forwarded to her by her mother. With an eager eye she skimmed its contents, and then asked herself, in derision, if she could really have supposed him incautious enough to have introduced the name of Hamilton to her notice? He who had hitherto preserved so suspicious a silence regarding his beautiful nurse! Only once could she remember his having made any allusion to her; and then it was in the most cursory manner, as an officer's wife who had been kind to him in his illness.

To that same unlucky wound, Selby had attributed in a great measure the gap which about that period had occurred in his correspondence; now, she only saw in it a proof of Mrs. Hamilton's fatal influence: fascinated by her, he had perhaps forgotten to write; "and who could wonder if it were so?" At the very time he was being so watched and tenderly cared for by this charming Alicia, just then it was that Mrs. Carew was pestering him with her

ill-judged remonstrances. Heaven! what a contrast must not this enthusiastic (apparently) high-souled woman, all ardour and disinterestedness, have offered to his cold-hearted, worldly-minded wife! The very nobleness of his own nature, and his power of appreciating excellence in others, must have been working against her."

Possessed with these torturing fancies, Selby contemplated her husband's return with very mixed feelings; he mentioned it as what was likely to occur ere long, and explained the chances for and against his obtaining leave of absence: but though he wrote kindly, and avoided all reference to their late disagreement, there were none of those bright and joyous anticipations of happiness which formerly accompanied his hopes of seeing her again; and she thought he somewhat studiously dwelt upon his intention of immediately acknowledging their marriage, as if he believed that to be her principal inducement in wishing for his return. Alas! with the beautiful Alicia, lying in wait for him, as it were, within the very shadow of the paternal halls, that return must be to Selby a very doubtful blessing.

There was one passage in his letter that particularly struck her, though it might not be intended to give her pain: but it was so gloomy, so unlike his former, sanguine, happy self! He was speaking of his late promotion, not as a circumstance to please and gratify her, but as a fact to be attended to, in order that her letters to him might be properly addressed; for so did she, her heart swelling as she read, construe the careless tone in which he

supposed the *Gazette* had informed her of his increased rank.

"In addition to your other honours, you will henceforth plume yourself on the grand distinction of being a captain's lady. We had some rather hot work on the 15th, and my friend Bingham being struck down by my side, I, as senior lieutenant, step into his place. Poor fellow! he was worthy of a better fate: yet why say that? why follow the fulsome jargon that is so commonly babbled over the dead by those who ought to know better? Heaven knows! if he may not be far happier in his lot than half the friends he has left to struggle with the disappointments of life; and who, while they are sickening under the infliction, think themselves privileged to insult his memory with airs of superiority and expressions of pity. I always thought that epithet 'poor,' as applied to a deceased friend, the worst compliment we could possibly pay him; and I am now more convinced of it than ever."

Selby read these few sentences till she had soon got them by heart; and much did she marvel whether they would have been written at all, supposing Mrs. Hamilton had stayed in England and minded her own business, instead of going abroad and meddling with that of the regimental surgeon.

As Mrs. Carew was now informed of all her daughter's adventures since her leaving Bath, Selby opened her mother's letter with some anxiety, to know how she would express herself on a point which must of necessity excite all her old feelings and prejudices against the Luttrels. If Selby felt



the humiliation of being intruded into the Horton society in so undignified a manner, her mother, with none of her softening predilections in favour of Hartley's friends, must be doubly mortified by it. But, to her surprise, the matter was discussed not only in a more moderate, but a far more cursory style than Selby had expected; her mother's thoughts were evidently engrossed by something distinct from *her* perplexities: she confessed to being annoyed, and even alarmed, by something which had lately happened to her;—as far as Selby could gather from a few broken hints, the matter was in some way connected with her father, but no direct explanation would Mrs. Carew afford her.

"You, my poor Selby," she continued, "have troubles enough of your own; and, till I ascertain more, it would be wrong to worry you with a thing which may, after all, have no serious foundation."

Selby knew her mother too well to believe she would seek to alarm her unnecessarily; there was plainly something disagreeable in agitation—probably something relating to money-matters, in which Mr. Carew might be implicated: her suppositions as to a trouble so vaguely intimated could go little farther than this. She was sorry, very sorry, that anything should have happened, while she was away, to disturb poor dear mama, and would do all she could to give her comfort, by writing most affectionately by return of post.

But, ah!—did she not?—yes, she certainly did see Mr. Wollaston walking in the garden with a newspaper in his hand; and foreign news was, more

than ever, interesting to her now : she must run after the old gentleman immediately, and get a glimpse of that *Morning Post* before it disappeared with him into his study, or there would be no peace for her for an hour or two to come. Lucky might Selby think herself, that, on a point of such vital moment to her, there should be no want of sympathy between her and her old friends.

Secluded as little Stukely undoubtedly was, and cut off, as it seemed to be, from much that occupied men's minds in general, she had, on first arriving in its rural shades, apprehended a total stagnation of ideas, as far as public topics were concerned, and anticipated nothing in the way of news more frequent or enlivening than perhaps the arrival of one weekly journal. But here she was pleasantly undeceived. The acting in their own peculiar round of duties had not tended to narrow the hearts of the Wollastons : interested as they were in the place where they lived, and, busied from hour to hour in its concerns, they could still find time to sympathize with the world beyond the vicarage ; and though the newspapers did not reach their quiet little nook till they were a day or two older than they should have been, still, when they *did* come, they never failed to be duly read and commented upon.

Mrs. Wollaston, however, deferring to her husband's opinion upon public matters with the most respectful docility : "things of this high nature, being so very much above my poor abilities ; nevertheless, having the advantage of a superior understanding ever at hand, to prompt and set me right, I do ven-

ture, now and then, to take upon me, and give a guess about passing events." And though the chance reports which, in those days, found their way by degrees into even the remotest districts,—the flying rumours of wars abroad, or tumults at home, Westminster elections, and the last great battle,—might not penetrate to little Stukely quite so soon as if it had stood on some great high road; yet it is certain, that what the news lost in authenticity, it manifestly gained in point of importance; enlisting all the human sympathies to a much greater extent than could have been effected by a more matter-of-fact statement.

It must not, however, be supposed that my excellent friends, the Wollastons, gave implicit credence to every report that made its way to their village; for they had a happy knack of believing only what they liked,—another decided advantage of receiving your information from a doubtful source. Whenever the news suited their loyal or patriotic prepossessions,—a victory, for instance, over the French abroad, or the Democrats at home,—it was hailed as perfectly authentic; and the old deaf postman, the common retailer of such matters, was treated with the distinction due to an accredited despatch. But if things took a contrary turn, and there came a hint that the army was not going on altogether so prosperously as might be wished, or that the Cabinet was unsettled, or that the Prince Regent had been hooted on his way to the House; then it was merely set down as another blunder of poor old John Simpson's, and passed over with the contempt it deserved.

Perhaps a slight suspicion, entertained at Stukely, that Simpson, notwithstanding outward and hypocritical demonstrations, was not at heart the loyal character he professed to be, lent some additional force to these doubts of his veracity ;—at all events, there was double pleasure when the news was good, in receiving it from one who was presumed to retail it reluctantly.

Little did the Wollastons think, when they repeated these flying rumours to Miss Carew, how deeply her heart was interested in some of them ; and when they came exulting over Marshal Soult, and John Simpson, with the report of some glorious victory, little, indeed, did they, good old souls, imagine with what a mixture of triumph and alarm she heard the news ! They were, indeed, somewhat struck with Selby's intimate acquaintance with Spanish geography ; for it seemed to them that they scarcely knew better the divisions in their own county than she did those of the province of Andalusia, or the various passes in the mountainous districts : and as for the numbers of the regiments on service, and the positions they occupied in relation to each other, her information was wonderful. When Mr. Wollaston was beginning to pore over his maps and newspapers, his fair visitor would set him right in a moment.

And in this state of outward peace and inward excitement, the time wore on at Stukely. The second week was entered on, and Selby, in the genuine humility of her nature, and her secret misgivings in all that related to herself and the Lut-

trels, was beginning to doubt if she should see or hear anything more of them while she remained in the country; when she received a letter from Mrs. Luttrell, couched in the kindest terms, and pressing her to fulfil, immediately, the promise she had given to revisit her.

In consideration of the prior claims of the Wollastons, Mrs. Luttrell had deferred making this request as long as possible; but, since parting with Miss Carew, her own plans had suffered some alteration,—it was likely that she would remove to London sooner than was at first proposed; and, as she could not bear to leave the country, and the vicinity of Miss Carew, without having become better acquainted with one who had made so charming an impression at Horton, she trusted that—supposing the arrangement was not quite disagreeable to her correspondent—Mrs. Wollaston might be kindly persuaded to sacrifice her own pleasure, and give up, for at least a few days, her acknowledged right in “so delightful a visitor.” Mrs. Luttrell concluded by mentioning the day after the morrow as the period most agreeable to her for receiving her cousin. On that day she should be able to drive over and meet her at Feltham, the market-town mid-way between Stukely and Horton; and she appointed the hour of meeting, and the principal inn, as a sure place of rendezvous to which their respective vehicles might be directed.

It was not, we are sorry to say, her mother-in-law’s affectionate style that raised such a flush in Selby’s cheek, and caused her hand to tremble as

it held the letter : the more tender and grateful emotions which such expressions should have called forth were now sadly in abeyance; for it was less the idea of Mrs. Luttrell than that of Mrs. Hamilton which possessed her as she read them; and there came over her a vague yet strong impression of some great end, some grand purpose, which was destined to be effected by her returning to the immediate neighbourhood of that dangerous woman. She was sure she would not leave Horton Hall without having ascertained exactly the degree of influence Mrs. Hamilton had acquired over Hartley: the observation of mere friends, even the sagacity of a mother, might be at fault; but the keen interest, the unerring perception of a wife—how could those instincts be blinded or misled?

To add to the common deceit of her ordinary life the odious character of a spy, was a circumstance which, in any other case, she would have shrunk from with disgust; but she salved over the mortifying fact with the excuse that this was a case of peculiar nicety, and therefore not to be judged by ordinary rules. It is to be feared that no small portion of poor Selby's self-respect had deserted her when she emerged from under that dusty old porch of St. Margaret Moses; and in whatever way she had decided on acting, she must still have remained a prey to that bitterest species of inquietude which consists of vain regret and self-upbraiding. In truth, no thought of rejecting this invitation seriously occurred to her; for ever since her residence at Stukely she had been secretly longing to be recalled to Horton.

The Wollastons, though sorry to part with her, were too considerate to throw any obstacles in the way of her associating with her relations; cousins to the fiftieth generation being sacred matters in their old-fashioned eyes. They only stipulated that her final stay with them should not be curtailed in consequence of her engagements elsewhere; and, with this proviso, gave their cheerful assent to the plan.

And now, even before she had passed the gates of Horton, Selby was again possessed by all the busy feelings that had there so powerfully assailed her; though the state of her mind could have been little suspected by those who saw her moving about with such outward serenity, and looking so fitted for the tranquil life around her. During the short time that remained to her at the vicarage, she gave up her solitary walks and musings, though now they were dearer to her than ever, and devoted herself entirely to the Wollastons; attending them in their short rambles, or sitting at work with the old lady, or finishing the evenings by performing Corelli's concertos, or lessons of Sebastian Bach and other old masters, such as the vicar delighted in; while he, who in his youth had been a respectable performer, accompanied her on the violoncello, the vicaress sitting by enraptured. Who, I say, could have fancied the sickening desire that lay brooding in her heart for the arrival of the moment which was to transport her far away from poor, dear little Stukely?

And here again was verified the hearty commendation bestowed by Mr. Francis Luttrell on the nature of female accomplishments. Music—that inesti-

mable gift to those who can appreciate it—although it is capable of employing the mental and bodily powers to the exclusion of other ideas, does not necessarily chain the mind to the instrument; so that while Selby, with a precision which drew forth a world of applause from her hearers, was giving each note its proper length and emphasis—was paying, apparently, the most praiseworthy attention to her pianos and fortes; now swelling into as rich a crescendo as the old instrument would humour, anon dying off into soft diminuendo—her thoughts, disunited from the finger that seemed to express them, marched not in Germany's grave compositions, nor revelled in the more voluptuous strains of Italy.

She rejoiced in her occupation chiefly because, while it served to amuse the Wollastons, she might ruminate, undisturbed, about her visit to Horton. Nevertheless, there were bounds to these contemplations, which were not to be transgressed with impunity; for no sooner did her frightened fancy settle itself on the fascinating Hamilton, than her breath would come short and quick, and her fingers lose something of their self-command, and there occurred certain quaverings in her performance such as Handel by no means contemplated in that particular concerto of his—"so strictly fugacious!" as the vicar reverentially pronounced it.

Miss Carew's failing powers were not lost upon the Wollastons, though their affectionate admiration of her led them to interpret even a few wrong notes to her advantage; for was she not over exerting herself in her amiable wish to give them pleasure?



"And highly gratified, indeed, they had been; for seldom or never had the vicarage resounded with such music: though they trusted the concert might, at some future time, be renewed, and that they might be allowed to call in one or two discriminating friends, worthy to increase the audience and partake of the pleasure."

"But now," the vicaress said, "Miss Carew was evidently overtasking her delightful energies, and she herself had been remiss in suffering her to play so long. So it was: self! self all the world over! Not that any fault of that sort could be laid to the charge of Mr. Wollaston; who was always full of consideration, and who had been so kindly exerting his own talents, and must be experiencing corresponding fatigue. She, their sole audience, was alone to blame, for sitting by so long, in idle enjoyment, without regarding the convenience of others; and as to pleading the great temptation that fell in my way, why, that, you know, is the excuse of all selfish persons. But, to be sure, my dear Mr. Wollaston, there is the cuckoo-clock striking; as if to reproach me even now. What does it say? Nine—ten—eleven, I declare; and the servants still up! and Saturday night and all! Dear me! who could have thought it?"

And with a something of self-reproach mingling in her good-humoured alacrity, the old lady began to ring bells, and be in a little bustle.

The vicar took matters much more composedly. The cock-a-hoop sensation of one who feels he has ably supported his part in the night's entertain-

ment was communicated to every wrinkle in his queer old face, as he carefully put up his violoncello.

"Eleven o'clock, is it?" said he, emphatically. "So may it be! So may it be, my dear Kitty! And thus have we snatched an hour from dull oblivion, devoting it to sweet companionship and exalted science."

"Nay, my dear Mr. Wollaston, far be it from me to raise a single objection. I, who have profited so much from the transgression of accustomed habits—gladly would *I* have continued listening to *such* music. I speak, as you well know, only on account of our little household."

"Well, well!—well! We will call them forth—with in to prayers, and then—'To bed! to bed!' as Shakespere says, in one of his incomparable works. And the servants, I question not, have enjoyed our little concert in their own way; for even to the humble and uneducated does Providence give an ear and a heart for the reception of sweet sounds. Yes, yes! the power of harmonious concords has an influence over most persons, whatever their degree in society; and I should rather surmise that they have been all in the passage listening to our melody, so that perchance we have had an audience outside as well as in: and though incapable, like my dear and discerning Kitty, of estimating our performance according to its merits, still we presume to hope," looking complacently at Selby, "that we have afforded pleasure in more quarters than one."

A sweet smile on the part of his visitor, and

a laudatory exclamation from Mrs. Wollaston, confirmed the self-approving notion.

“And then with regard to the morrow being Sunday, of which circumstance my dear and ever-careful Mrs. Wollaston reminds me, I, Miss Carew, am not one of those—and I understand, with regret, that the case is far from uncommon—who leave their sermons to be finished on the Saturday night; for then, indeed, our learned friend, Sebastian, not to speak of the immortal Handel, might have seduced me into an error: but that is not my way. No, no, a performance thus postponed, and hurried in the execution, must needs be unworthy of acceptance with God or man. A work undertaken for public benefit must be entered upon with a certain solemnity of purpose, not pushed aside irreverently till the eleventh hour: and now here come the household to prayers, and we will yet, my dear Kitty, be in bed before midnight.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE morning dawned which was to bring a renewal of Selby's acquaintance with her husband's family. The Wollastons, happily ignorant of what was passing in the troubled mind of their dear young friend, took leave of her with their usual cheerfulness; for in the midst of their adieux there was a lively anticipation of a speedy reunion.

But the affectionate earnestness of Selby's manner showed traces of that heavy presentiment which now so often weighed upon her spirits: an indefinite apprehension of some unblessed discovery or strange mischance, such as might happen before they could meet again. Every hope that now fluttered round her heart might be quenched in a most painful certainty—a certainty too horrible to allow of her seeking even their society; or strange rumours might get abroad, and she be lowered in their estimation: who could tell? Twice as they stood outside the garden-gate, reiterating good wishes and praises of the fine day, and courteous messages to the Luttrels, did she turn back to embrace them again; and till the vicarage was out of sight she

continued gazing wistfully after it and its kind old inmates. Her jealous heart had really known but little peace there ; and yet, compared to what might be awaiting her elsewhere, Stukely appeared like the safest and quietest of all sanctuaries. The sight of the Luttrell carriage, however, awaiting her at the White Hart at Feltham, restored Selby to many of her old Hamiltonian feelings ; and the affectionate greeting with which her mother-in-law welcomed her reanimated her drooping spirits : come of it what might, she would not have turned back again for the whole world.

As for Mrs. Luttrell, no secret misgiving disturbed *her* self-complacency. In regaining the society of "this sweet young creature!"—for so, to the infinite disgust of Miss Luttrell, her father and aunt were in the habit of particularizing cousin John's daughter—she looked forward to hours of intercourse, almost, if not quite, confidential ; at all events a constant opportunity of talking about her son : that subject of all others most delightful to her. She apologised to Selby for taking her farther down the town instead of proceeding at once towards Horton, "having a little business to settle ;" and so, while the carriage paused at certain shop-doors, Miss Carew kept a sharp look-out upon every open vehicle that drove by, lest the elegant equipage from Myrtle Cottage, with its lovely charioteer and spirited ponies, should be amongst the number.

"And now," said Mrs. Luttrell, after they had stopped two or three times, "if you are not very tired .

of this dusty town, there is one more place I should like to call at ; but there I must alight, and if you have no objection I should like you to go in with me." She then bade them drive to Mr. Mills's. "He is a very clever young artist," she continued, "whom we are anxious to encourage, and at present I am employing him to take a miniature; and as I am particularly interested in the success of the likeness I make a point of looking in upon him now and then to see how he is going on."

"A miniature of yourself, ma'am?"

"No, it is a likeness of my son; he is reducing it from a very fine full-length, which was painted by Lawrence shortly before Hartley entered the army. His godmother, Lady Thornton, has long been wishing for some sketch of him, and I am having it done without her knowledge, intending to surprise her with it on her birthday. Dear old lady, she will be *so* charmed!"

Had Mrs. Luttrell happened to turn her head just then, she must have been struck with the very brilliant red (there was hardly a carnation on Mr. Mills's pallettes that would have matched it), which had overspread the countenance of her companion; but she was looking another way, and turning to Selby only as the carriage stopped at the artist's lodging, she said, in her most persuasive tone,—

"You have no objection to going in with me? Mr. Mills's studio is rather close, I know; but we will not stay long: and I should so much like to have your opinion of what he is doing; it is such a very desirable thing for a young artist to have

the unbiassed judgment of an entire stranger, any one whose eye is unprejudiced by old associations: nothing pleases Mr. Mills so much."

Thus spoke Mrs. Luttrell, in the fulness of her maternal affection and patronage of the arts; and what is more she really believed what she was saying. She actually thought that the quiet shy young painter, with all the sensitiveness that belongs to genius struggling with scanty means and in withering obscurity, the consciousness of ability without the opportunity of doing great things—in short, labouring under all the ills that painting is heir to; she really thought he was pleased to have his time taken up with the visitors she so often brought him, and gratified with the criticisms of the vain, the ignorant, or the presuming: for amongst all the idle people she had introduced into his study, how few might have deserved any other epithet!

Gentle and well-intentioned as Mrs. Luttrell was, little did she suppose how heavily poor Mr. Mills had often sighed at the sound of her soft voice on the stairs; as she ushered up an attendant connoisseur in the person of some tittering girl, or sententious old lady, who took upon them, uninstructed as they were in the very rudiments of his profession, to sit in judgment on its most important parts: for whose ignorant praise he felt no respect, yet whose censure (even while he despised it) stung and irritated him.

Often, after thus wasting his valuable half-hours, had his kind patroness left him with a mortified

heart and goaded temper, to regain, as he best might, those hopes and aspirations which serve to cheer the remembrance of past labours, and stimulate anew to fresh exertions ; but which are of so tender and evanescent a nature, that an unkind or even thoughtless word, the scorn of the foolish, or the depreciation of the pedantic, may damp them in a moment. On this occasion, however, the sickness of heart with which he turned from his easel to greet the invaders of his privacy with due respect, was but a false presentiment of evil.

One glance at the beautiful creature who followed his patroness into the room, sufficed to reassure him. Unaffected simplicity reigned in every feature of that intelligent face, and shewed, in every movement of her form, that ignorance and presumption could find no harbour there ! From those lips nothing but sense and sweetness could proceed ; and, instead of the young painter's temper being endangered, it was his heart that was most likely to be put in jeopardy !

And now, good Mr. Mills take heed : I advise you, as a friend, to have a provident regard to the circumstances of your condition, and to look upon the fair person who has come to visit you and your little painting room, precisely as you did at the morning star, which so delighted you at day-dawn, when you opened your shutters to pursue your professional labours, the lazy town around you lying still buried in sleep. You lingered some few minutes at your casement, gazing with thoughts of grateful, admiring wonder, at that brightest portion of the visible creation : and having satisfied yourself with



the sight, you turned away; and, with sober mind and steady hand, went about your business as a man should do, who trusts, in spite of present difficulties, to see himself, some of these days, an R.A. for certain; and has even indistinct musings about the president's chair itself. Then, with content written on your own brow, you washed in the scarlet turban which rested on that of Mrs. Thomas Tims, in that interesting family group, wherein you are depicting herself, her red-nosed husband, and seven of their little pledges. Take heed, I repeat, lest, gazing too ardently on that star of beauty, the lovely Carew, you should turn disgusted from the commonplace features of your employers, and squander many a precious moment in trying to sketch, from memory, your patroness's fair friend.

If Selby really supposed herself able to behold, unmoved, the likeness of her wedded lord, she shewed a strange ignorance of herself; for when she entered the little close-smelling, darkened room, and Mrs. Luttrell eagerly accosted her with, "There, that's Hartley—that is the picture of my son;" a tremor seized her, as if she had been in the presence of the dear, though now dreaded, original himself, and she dared not trust herself to look at it. Feigning, therefore, not to hear, she moved straight to a corner of the studio, where, reclining against the wainscoat, were the Tims family, in all their glory of best gowns and Sunday waistcoats.

But the maternal pride of Mrs. Luttrell allowed her not to linger there. "Oblige me by giving us a little more light, Mr. Mills," said she; and the

young man, obeying her, threw back the low window-shutter to its fullest extent. Then, as the daylight fell unobstructed on the portrait, which occupied an easel in the middle of the room, she took Selby by the arm and almost impatiently drew her towards it.

“Excuse me, my dear Miss Carew, you shall examine all Mr. Mills’s nice paintings presently, but I must have you first look at this—it is *such* a likeness!—at least it was when taken; but Heaven knows how he may be altered by this time!”

From a person of the cultivated taste she attributed to Selby, Mrs. Luttrell expected praise, both warm and judicious, on this her favourite topic; something like disappointment, therefore, ensued, when Miss Carew, after standing a very few moments before the picture, and that in perfect silence, turned suddenly away, and walked to the window: a slight but troublesome cough obliging her to cover the lower part of her face with her handkerchief. Had it been to save her life, she could not have uttered a word: it was, indeed, *so* like! *so dreadfully* like! It had been taken just before Hartley’s leaving home; and although, when Selby knew him, he had acquired a more manly and military air, yet the features, attitude, and expression, were all perfect; and, for the moment, the sight of her husband himself, would scarcely have agitated her more than this too-faithful representation of him.

The close smell of the painting-room afforded her some excuse for lingering at the window, while Mrs. Luttrell conversed with Mr. Mills, and ascertained what progress he had made with the miniature; but

presently Miss Carew was directly appealed to, and her opinion required on the success of the copy ; the young painter officiously turning the original round, so that she might examine both, and still have the benefit of the fresh air from the window. With a shaking hand she took the miniature, and forced herself to say something in its praise ; while the artist, in the technical language which had become to him as his mother-tongue, held forth on tints and half tints, backgrounds and draperies. Had she but been alone, how she might have looked and wept, and looked again, and talked to the image of her beloved, and have recalled the happy memories which such a picture must needs excite.

An objection occurring to her, she observed, by way of saying something, " You seem to me to have caught the prevailing character remarkably well ; but are you not deepening the complexion a little too much ? And, possibly my eye deceives me, but I should say the hair grew scarcely so long on the temples." It was the likeness treasured in her own sad memory—truer even than that on the easel—that Selby referred to.

" You are perfectly correct, ma'am," said the artist, " it is exactly as you observe ; but I thought I might venture to make this slight deviation from the original, as I have been given to understand that Captain Luttrell is considerably darker than when Lawrence's portrait was taken, and now generally wears his hair a trifle lower on the left brow. Of course," addressing his patroness respectfully, " I can alter anything Mrs. Luttrell objects to ; but

it struck me, that as the captain is shortly expected home, and will probably be compared in person with the miniature, I should do well to aim at making it resemble what he is at the present moment, or Lady Thornton might feel a little disappointed."

Mrs. Luttrell, with the highest complacency, approved of everything that had been done, thought it quite an excellent idea, and much extolled Mr. Mills's judgment in acting upon it so immediately; he thereupon, making bows and grateful grimaces. And Selby, who, now that she had used herself to looking in that dear face, grew every moment more fascinated with the employment, reluctantly, and not without many a secret sigh, resigned the precious piece of ivory into the hands of the young artist.

"Yes," said he, charmed to expatiate to such a listener, "the change is but slight, very slight: in fact, it is only an extremely correct eye, or one intimate with the original himself, which would detect it. Yet how the whole character of the countenance is heightened by it: imperceptibly, one may almost say, yet so wonderfully improved."

Here he held the miniature full in the light; his two fond auditors hanging on it with eyes of tearful interest.

Mr. Mills proceeded,—"The manly look, which is all that Lawrence's portrait can be said to want; all else is perfection, as Mrs. Hamilton was observing to me the last time she honoured me with a call."

"Mrs. Hamilton!" cried both ladies at once; Mrs. Luttrell's soft, satisfied look deserting her in an instant, and Selby blushing with anger. "And what has *Mrs. Hamilton* to do with the matter?" inquired Mrs. Luttrell, with a haughtiness such as poor Mr. Mills had not even thought her capable of assuming.

In some trepidation, though wholly ignorant of his offence, he strove to explain that Mrs. Hamilton, the lady living at Brackenbury, well known, as he understood, at Horton Hall, had called upon him respecting a little business; and, as it happened to be just after his commencing the likeness, Captain Luttrell's portrait had come under her observation, and she had kindly offered him a little advice on the subject: in fact, it was she who had suggested the alteration he had ventured on. Of course, he should not have given in to the views of a perfect stranger, and one who did not know the original extremely well; but understanding that the lady was a great friend of Captain Luttrell's when abroad, Mr. Mills thought he could not have better authority: so at least he had fancied; but of course," for he saw his patroness was in no wise softened, "of course he would abide implicitly by Mrs. Luttrell's directions, and alter anything that displeased her."

"Certainly, Mr. Mills," said Mrs. Luttrell, with unhesitating decision; "and you will oblige me by adhering precisely to the original picture. When my son returns, I shall hope to prevail on him to sit to you for a fresh likeness; but with regard to

this particular copy, I beg you to take your instructions only from me."

Mr. Mills bowed ; but this time with solemnity.

"I am sure Miss Carew will agree with me, that nothing can be better than Lawrence's portrait?"

"No, nothing in the world," said Selby, with the same decided expression. "I would not have it altered on *any* account;" then venturing one steadfast look at the easel, she added, in a voice that somehow went to the very heart of her mother-in-law, "Who would not rather preserve the image of him such as he was when this was taken, than what he may now have become!"

"Oh! that is so exactly my feeling," was Mrs. Luttrell's enthusiastic rejoinder. "Yes, Mr. Mills, if you please, I will thank you to wash off that dirty complexion, and the unpleasant appearance about the hair; and I should like to have both likenesses sent home as soon as you can make it convenient."

Mr. Mills had nothing for it but to promise strict obedience and an early delivery. He attended the ladies to the carriage, loitered a few moments till it had turned the corner of the street, and then returned to his painting-room; and supposing that this visit of the two fair friends had somewhat interfered with his morning's work, he might (if he had known more) have consoled himself with the reflection that he had taken an ample, though unintentional revenge on them both.

An incident like this could hardly fail to draw forth the confidence of the one lady, and the sympathy of the other; for if on the part of Mrs.

Luttrell there existed any particle of reserve, it was melted at once by the uncontrollable warmth of her companion. A colder and far more cautious temperament than that of Hartley's mother, would indeed have found it difficult to resist the open indignation expressed in the glowing cheek and flashing eye that was turned upon her as the carriage door was shut upon them, or the tone of virtuous horror which designated Mrs. Hamilton as "that shameless woman!" A phrase so broad and uncompromising had never yet, in the presence of Mrs. Luttrell, been applied to the captivating Alicia; and it pleased her wonderfully: invective, which might have offended her sense of good breeding on any other subject, or from less agreeable lips, seemed in the case of her young cousin but the outpouring of a mind generous and unsophisticated.

The very tears were standing in her eyes as she exclaimed,—“Oh, ma'am, what can be her motive? What can she mean by such conduct? She seems to glory in displaying the very worst feelings of her nature: feelings that any woman, not utterly depraved, would die rather than betray; and yet,” changing her tone, “she knows him well! Can it be possible that he—I mean the object of her wicked attachment,—surely such behaviour can never be attractive to him.” She dared not approach that part of the subject more closely; and Mrs. Luttrell, with a melancholy smile, and pressing Selby's hand as if to thank her for her disinterested sympathy, said, “God knows how that may be! There was a time, my dear Miss Carew, when I would have

staked my life, on his being as refined and delicate in his sentiments as either you or I; but years have passed away since then, and though he writes as charmingly as ever——”

“Does he?—excuse the question;” here was a little hesitation—“but does he often mention this lady? and—is he so *very* warm in his praise of her?”

“Why, sometimes I have wished that he had said less: and yet, on coolly weighing his expressions, one could hardly think them too strong; considering their natural intimacy, and the services she undoubtedly rendered him. You have heard the story from Mrs. Grey, I think? The fact is, Miss Carew, I am so morbidly sensitive on this head, that I know very well I lose all power of discriminating when I suspect a person of this description of having acquired an undue influence over my beloved Hartley. But if you knew him—at least, if you could see him as he was when I parted from him—you would, I am confident, excuse all my weakness. Indeed, indeed! he is too good to be sacrificed to this wild, unprincipled woman!”

Much in this strain ran the discourse during that confidential drive; which, in the excitement of her feelings, seemed to Selby the shortest seven miles that had ever been measured. Mrs. Luttrell indulged herself in describing at large whatever in the conduct of Mrs. Hamilton had excited her maternal apprehensions, adding many a little trait to those already mentioned by the family friend; and, being naturally acted upon by the earnest attention



of her young relation, she even promised to shew her some of Hartley's letters : a plain proof, if any were wanting, that Miss Carew stood in the highest possible favour with her unconscious mother-in-law. Indeed, from the manner in which this proposal was made and listened to, it might be easily seen that the fair friends regarded it as one of the greatest boons that could be vouchsafed on the one hand, and received on the other.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE Marshams and Mr. Fothergill were still visiting at the Hall: the latter, however, much against his will; for having succumbed to the disagreeable necessity of accommodating the mother and daughter at his house in town, he was anxious to proceed in advance of them, that he might overlook certain domestic arrangements, and especially ascertain how such a sudden invasion was likely to be taken by his housekeeper. But as it suited Mrs. Marsham to avail herself of his comfortable carriage to London, she would, on no account, suffer him to stir till she was ready to accompany him. So the old widower, infirm of purpose as we have described him to be wherever female influence predominated, fidgeted and fretted in vain; formed masculine resolutions in his quiet bed overnight, and broke them all next morning, as soon as he encountered the bold black eyes of his cousin, Marsham; his struggles for the exercise of free will growing fainter and fainter. Yet still would the old bird flutter a drooping wing, and shuffle from perch to perch; still wistfully eye the door of his cage, and wonder why—as it seemed

to stand wide open—he could not contrive to get out of it.

“There are so many little things to be seen to, cousin,” he would say, with an appealing look at Mrs. Marsham; “the guest chamber in Great George-street has scarcely been occupied more than once since the lamented event.”

“Then, my dear sir, it is high time that it should.” Such was her cheerful and ready rejoinder. “I only wonder the furniture is not entirely spoilt.”

“Oh! no fear of that, as long as Hoskins has the general superintendence of everything. She is *such* a manager!”

“Ah, sir! but no management in the world will keep the moth out of your hangings, unless they are used for, at least, a month or six weeks every year.”

This was introduced to specify, in a free and natural manner peculiar to my cousin Marsham, the length of time she intended to stay in Great George-street; and the old gentleman’s countenance fell accordingly, for he wanted to limit her to a fortnight.

“And as to that nice furniture of yours, believe me, your housemaids will never be induced to trouble themselves about an uninhabited room. The work is slurred over from week to week, and then, when a visitor happens to drop in unexpectedly, they try to make up for lost time; and there is such a rubbing and scrubbing with bees’ wax and turpentine. Oh! I know them of old.”

But Mr. Fothergill repelled the foul insinuation with unwonted energy.

"No!" he cried, "excuse me there: no bees' wax, and not a drop of turpentine. Such things have never yet polluted our mahogany. Mrs. Fothergill was a professed enemy to everything of the sort—'Meretricious polish!' I have often heard her call it so—'False and meretricious!' No! you will excuse me, cousin; but bees' wax is a thing unknown in Great George-street."

Mrs. Marsham had unwittingly aroused all the dormant energies of the little mind she was working upon. The picture of household mismanagement which she conjured up excited more than it alarmed him; so she took up another branch of the subject.

"The fact is, my dear cousin, we see plainly through your kind object in seeking to get the start of us: you are anxious to make us quite at home, and perfectly comfortable in all our little arrangements; and truly obliged do I and my dear child feel for such hospitable solicitude. But you carry it too far; indeed, you do. (Fanny, don't bite your nails.) If you did but know how easily we are satisfied, and what simple, unrequiring visitors we are, you would make no difficulty of lodging us. We give no sort of trouble in a house."—Here the ladies of Horton exchanged looks:—"and that your good housekeeper and the rest of your people will soon discover. Besides, you know, we shall have our Elizabeth—our Betty, as we call her—to wait upon us."

"Ha! a waiting-woman," remarked her victim, with an expression of suffering resignation; for again.

the oft-repeated dictum of the dear departed rose to his remembrance, that "although such encumbrances were inevitable in polished life, she would decidedly prefer *three* mistresses in the parlour to *one* lady's-maid in the servants' hall."

"Yes; there will be our own Betty always at hand to attend to our trifling wants, and bring us our jug of warm water into our rooms; which is all we shall require." It was said with the cheerful air of virtuous moderation.

"La, mama!" said Fanny, "I'm sure I shall require a great deal more than that! The idea of wanting nothing but hot water when one gets to London!"

"Be quiet, Fanny!"

"I shall want five new frocks, at least," pursued the young lady, "and a chip hat and a white satin pelisse for the dear delightful wedding, and a fan and a reticule, and a new pair of dancing-shoes with opera soles and silver bows. Oh, mama! won't it be nice? I shall see all Miss Drake's beautiful dresses as they come in from the milliners, and help to cut up the cake! You can't think what a way all the girls at horrid Miss Crump's are in about it: there are six who have made me give them a solemn promise to write them an account of every particular; and, of course, they are all to have a bit of cake to dream upon."

Mr. Fothergill was of opinion that young ladies of that tender age had better be minding their lessons, and was not much enlightened by Fanny's assurance that it was impossible for anybody to learn

anything, the masters at that dreadful school being all so old and so ugly.

At this crisis, Mrs. Marsham, finding all her cautionary signals unavailing, and seriously afraid of the effect Fanny's unguarded speeches might have on the demure old widower, interposed to bring the discourse round to a less dangerous point. Again she lauded his friendly hospitality "so cheerfully accorded," and expatiated, to his secret annoyance, (though he dared not contradict her), on the mutual advantages which, she asserted, would accrue from their proposed conjunction in Great George-street: "for though I don't hesitate to confess that Fanny and I shall find it highly convenient, as well as agreeable, to make your comfortable mansion our head-quarters for a month or two, I flatter myself on the other hand, my dear sir, that we shall do you an immense deal of good, and make quite another creature of you before we leave Westminster. No one knows better than yourself the cheering influence of female society—so sincere a mourner as you have been: but we will not touch upon that mournful subject. Now, my spirits, thank Heaven, are none of the worst; and, as for Fanny, dear child, she is always lively."

"That," said Fanny, "is because I am not in love. Now, Margaret Malpas is. I know she was in love no less than three times last quarter; and I do think it makes her very cross and disagreeable: and so I and Mary Dubbinson both told her. The Sunday before the holidays it rained quite hard as we went to church, and I couldn't think why it was that

she kept her umbrella all to herself, and would keep splashing me with her clogs all the way we went. We had quite a serious quarrel about it, though she had been my friend the half-year before last; but, afterwards, she told me Captain Spicer was at the bottom of it all,—so then we made it up.”

Mr. Fothergill looked at Fanny with a bewildered mind, for the concatenation between the gallant Captain Spicer, of his majesty’s — regiment of foot, with the silk umbrella and dirty clogs of Miss Margaret Malpas, he was utterly unable to take in; and, ere he could ask for further information, the vivacious young lady had flown off to some other subject.

It has sometimes occurred to me, during my visits to the British Museum, to observe some grave old gentleman, with his spectacles and note-book, hanging in deep thought over the hieroglyphics which cover the Egyptian curiosities contained in that far-famed collection; the wide field of speculation into which he has wandered is, evidently, not displeasing to him, though puzzling withal; and in much the same spirit did Mr. Fothergill regard his youthful relative, Miss Fanny Marsham, when unrestrained by any troublesome scruples of decorum, she gave vent to whatever happened, for the moment, to occupy her giddy brain. Yet, in one respect, the comparison will scarcely serve; for the reader of hieroglyphics probably persuades himself that, when his morning’s work is over, he has profited much by it, and has obtained more than one valuable

hint respecting the votaries of Isis—those very slim gentlemen, and ladies utterly devoid of bustle, sometimes terminating, upwards, in the physiognomy of a hawk, or what seems, to the uninitiated, to be a cat's head and lappets. But, to do him justice, the venerable Fothergill never flattered himself with having attained any clear apprehension of these rhapsodies of his young cousin. How was it to be expected that he should? He who had lived surrounded by one discreet and elderly circle, the sayings and doings of which were regulated by the strictest regard to what they called "decorum;" amongst whom Mrs. Fothergill, stiff in opinion and manners, dry and dogmatical in speech, held undisputed sway: being held, by the still inferior understandings of such as suffered her dictation, as the Mrs. Montague of their set.

"It frightens me," he would say, in a tremulous whisper, when quite sure that Mrs. Marsham was out of hearing,—“it quite takes away my breath, to hear so young a lady as Miss Fanny go on so about suitors and love-making, and such sort of unpleasant subjects; and I wonder her mama doesn't tremble to think what it may lead to. Mrs. Fothergill's opinion of boarding-schools was far from being favourable, on the whole; always excepting the establishment at which she and her sisters were brought up, and Mrs. Tilbury's, of Kensington-square, I never heard her approve of any: but this I would not have publicly mentioned.”

Poor cousin Fothergill! he spoke but from a sense of relationship, and an abstract regard for



female propriety ; little dreaming that he was fated, in the end, to take a personal, and therefore much deeper interest in the demeanour of the lively Fanny.

Selby's hopes of seeing at this time a great deal of Mrs. Hamilton were unfulfilled ; a succession of rainy days kept the invalid and his beautiful wife at home, and nothing more to the purpose than verbal messages, or three-cornered notes at farthest, passed between Myrtle Cottage and the Hall. Nor did she find the fair Alicia so often referred to as she had expected ; for, however new and important to herself was the subject of this lady's peculiarities, it was an old story at Horton, and worn tolerably threadbare.

Fanny Marsham was too much engrossed by her approaching visit to London to turn her attention that way ; and, though opportunities of conversing with Mrs. Grey were not wanting, Selby never again ventured any direct questioning on this too-exciting topic. Even Mrs. Luttrell was hardly as communicative as might have been wished ; though it was plainly the want of leisure, rather than inclination, that prevented her from talking constantly of her son : for what with the requirements of society out of doors, and the claims of guests within, her time was a good deal occupied. Still, some passing remark, full of meaning, and to Selby of the deepest interest, would frequently be addressed to her private ear ; and once she was actually admitted to the privilege, so dearly coveted, of hearing a portion of Captain Luttrell's letters to his mother, those passages being of course selected, which in the eyes

of that fond mother more especially displayed the peculiar excellences of her dear Hartley.

It was with a sweet disturbance of the inner woman—a most felicitous union of joy and pride, that Selby listened; and even ventured now and then a timid approval: more by looks than words.

It could not escape her notice, that in his later correspondence with his mother, Hartley had been far more diffuse than in his letters to herself; but so long as the dreaded name of Hamilton occurred but seldom, or appeared only in the sober expressions of a reasonable and justifiable friendship, poor Selby could endure much in the way of personal mortification. She was too sensitive to all such indications, not to perceive that his love for her had somewhat cooled; she only trusted that the change resulted from time's insidious progress, and man's natural inconstancy, and not from the influence of this seducing woman.

On the whole, and upon an acute examination of the passages submitted to her, her alarm received no material increase. It struck her that, in more than one instance, Mrs. Luttrell had been worked upon by the worldly distrust of those about her, to lay too great a stress on his grateful commendations of his friend's wife: in short, had Hartley been equally explicit to herself, he might have lauded Mrs. Hamilton to the skies, and not one pang of jealousy would have ruffled the serenity of Selby's confidence—it was his strange reserve on this point that made her still tremble.

As usual, there was much intercourse passing be-

tween the Hall and the Lodge, and Selby had particular pleasure in improving her acquaintance with Mr. Francis. He, amongst her husband's relations, was the one with whom she felt most at ease. She had long ceased to expect more than common civility from his daughter; and as for Mrs. Luttrell, the very love she felt for her rendered the reproaches of her conscience so much the sharper, when that unsuspecting mother-in-law was loading her with caresses, and admitting her to all the privileges of unreserved intimacy; but none of these scruples embittered her intercourse with uncle Francis: though a deeper insight into the mind of Miss Luttrell might, in some sort, have altered the style of her deportment towards the amiable proprietor of Horton Lodge. More than one allusion to the name of Blenkinsop had, indeed, met her ear; but, ignorant as she was of the meaning it conveyed to the family in general, Selby continued on all occasions to distinguish Mr. Francis with her softest smiles and readiest attention; while Esther, with the severe eye of criticism, and the feelings of a spy—too much interested in the event of proceedings to weigh them impartially—observed the behaviour of both parties, and suffered herself occasionally to comment on it to her bosom-friend, Mrs. Grey.

“Surely she might content herself with toadying my aunt,” she would say, “without falling foul of my father in this desperate way. Did you notice how she sprang down the Hall steps to meet him this morning? Had he been an accepted lover, she could hardly have shewn more alacrity.”

"In that case she would not, perhaps, have displayed so much," was the moderate rejoinder. "Recollecting the difference of their years, we may suppose she looks upon him in the light of a parent."

"Nonsense! Mrs. Grey; we can suppose no such thing: and I wonder that you, who pretend to some knowledge of the world, should talk so weakly. What has age to do with the matter? I have watched her narrowly since she first (in an evil hour) came amongst us, and I can plainly perceive that she is a dangerous person. You may shake your head as much as you please; but I never think well of any woman who is a universal favourite with the men. There was young Romilly, engaged as he is, half bewitched by her; and do you suppose Sir William Gascoigne would have been at the Hall last night, if the 'fair Carew,' as they affectedly call her, had been safe at Stukely parsonage? No, he would as soon have thought of flying as of leaving that poor, little, weak wife of his to fret her heart out at home: and you know it as well as I do."

Mrs. Grey uttered that little inward chuckle with which she was used to contemplate some piece of gossip, rather scandalous in its nature, yet in a certain degree amusing; and was fain to confess, "She *did* think Sir William might as well have staid away. But it strikes me, Esther, we are both of us getting very censorious; and the sooner we leave our country-neighbours to themselves, the better it will be for their reputations and our own

simplicity. Let us get to London, my dear, as soon as we can."

"Oh, there is little chance of that, ma'am: I mentioned it this very morning to my father, and he could not see why we should be in any hurry to go to town."

"Humph!" said the old lady; "a few days ago he was all for hastening up to take care of his brother, and see that he had proper advice, and did not kill himself with parliamentary business. Upon my word it's the queerest world this of ours! But I suppose, Esther, you and I can do little good by interfering: we must e'en let things take their own course,"

"Oh, no!" and a most bitter smile accompanied Miss Luttrell's words, "*we* are neither of us young or handsome enough to have the smallest influence. All that is left for *us*, is to sit by and play audience; and even in that poor capacity our censure or applause will be equally unimportant to anybody but ourselves."

It was only to the safe ear of her old companion that Esther ventured to declare the real grounds of her aversion to Selby; a sense of filial respect forbade her hinting at it, as yet, even to Mrs. Damer, or her aunt Isabella: and yet she could not, when all the world about her was sounding forth the merits of the fair Carew, altogether abstain from contradicting them.

A few days after Selby's arrival at Horton, it happened that Mrs. Luttrell and Mr. Francis were praising her, amongst other subjects of laudation,

for the facility with which she entered into all the ways of the place, and the feelings of its inmates.

"There are few persons," said the former, "who would so soon have overcome the awkwardness of a first introduction, (and that too *so* abrupt) as this sweet girl has done. I consider myself peculiarly fortunate in meeting with her; she takes so warm an interest in everything that concerns me, and her views on every subject are so just and feeling. In short, I cannot regard her as a new acquaintance: we seem to have been intimate for years."

"Precisely so!" Mr. Francis chimed in: "she is already one of us—a Luttrell all over."

"Now that," said Esther, "is exactly the point in Miss Carew's conduct that pleases me the least, and leads me to question her sincerity. She has been too much a stranger to us to have any real interest in our concerns; nay, considering who brought her up, her prejudices must perforce have been all, as one may say, anti-Luttrell: with such a mother as Mrs. Carew, it could not be otherwise. Praise her, if you will, for a good share of worldly wisdom, in knowing how to rise in society, and ingratiate herself with the richest of her relations; but you must give me leave to suspect the candour of the young lady in the means she takes to accomplish her object. I like not these sudden attachments, and the wonderful interest she is kind enough to take in us all, absent as well as present: she means it for civility, but, to my thinking, it borders very nearly on the impertinent."

Mrs. Luttrell and her brother-in-law entered into

a warm defence of their favourite : the former was sure that so sweet a face must be the index of a mind all truth and excellence ; while the line of argument chosen by Mr. Francis satisfied his daughter still less : for, after adducing various reasons for supposing Miss Carew to be uninfluenced by the prejudices of her mother, he concluded by inquiring gaily why they should go farther than the company present, in order to discover causes of conciliation. "For my part," said he, "I am very well inclined to believe, that it is simply her personal knowledge of us and our manifold merits that has altered her opinion ; supposing that soft nature ever harboured a feeling of the sort. I see nothing at all romantic or improbable in such a supposition : do you, Isabella ? Ha, ha !" and the old gentleman placing one leg a little in advance of the other, and balancing himself first on the heel and then on the toe, went through such a course of self-approving fidgets, as rendered his daughter still more cross and suspicious.

The return of fine weather—which Mrs. Luttrell remarked upon discontentedly, as necessitating a renewal of the accustomed intercourse with the Hamiltons—was hailed by Selby with a satisfaction not unmixed with fear. Disappointed as she yet was in the only purpose for which she had returned to Horton, she found herself growing each day more keenly susceptible to the impropriety of the step she had taken. Much of the evil to be anticipated from it was now inevitable ; but it was painful indeed to think that she had sacrificed her own dignity, and

insured the displeasure of her husband, without even attaining the end she had at heart.

So, as the sun's broad rays, and the phaeton of Myrtle Cottage, again became visible on the highways of Brackenbury, she smothered her conscientious scruples, and suffered her feeble offers of departure to be once more overruled by Mrs. Luttrell's affectionate persuasions.

"It might be only for a short time that she should be able to enjoy Miss Carew's society. Every day they were expecting Mr. Pickering from town, and on his report of matters there, it wholly depended whether she should await the return of Mr. Luttrell in the country, or join him immediately in London."

And then, Mrs. Luttrell, with a lively satisfaction which could not be otherwise than flattering to the grateful, loving heart of her daughter-in-law, anticipated the pleasure of soon having her sweet young friend entirely to herself; the following morning being fixed for the departure of her other guests.

By this it will be understood, that Mrs. Marsham had at last given Mr. Fothergill permission to leave Horton, and had managed, besides, to overrule his inclinations on another very material point; for she had, by dint of alternately coaxing and bullying, actually persuaded him to take the entire charge of Fanny, and entertain her in town till she thought fit to follow them. Sore and earnest had been the struggle, in more quarters than one; for the timid old widower was frightened almost into a nervous fever at the prospect of having the wild, wilful school-girl thrown entirely on his hands. "Such a serious



responsibility!—in fact, at my time of life, it may be called an awful charge!” While Fanny was in tears at the bare idea of going up alone with “that horrid old gentleman; so fat, and so stupid! Oh, mama, it’s barbarous of you! it’s quite an unnatural act: isn’t it, Mrs. Luttrell? Miss Carew, did you ever know anything like it?”

“Don’t cry, my dear Fanny: I’ve no doubt you’ll get on very nicely with Mr. Fothergill, who is really the kindest person——”

“Yes, but he never goes to the play, for all that: he has not been to one of the theatres since his stiff old wife died, not even to Astley’s:” here was a decided sob—“and, if mama isn’t there to make him——”

“Now, my own Fanny,” was the maternal adjuration, reproachful, yet tender, “be reasonable, and don’t make a fuss. I, unnatural, indeed! It is you, I think, that deserve that name, shewing so little consideration for poor dear Elizabeth” (a visit to a sick married daughter was Mrs. Marsham’s excuse for this sudden change in her plans): “I wonder your sisterly affection doesn’t plead for her—so much as she is longing to see me, poor thing!”

“Oh, that’s all very fine; but Lizzy’s got a husband to make much of her.”

“I beg your pardon, this very day Mr. Wainwright goes off for a week to the races. I would have you know, my Fanny, that husbands are not always so ready to stay at home and comfort their poor sick wives: and that you may find to your cost some of these days.”

"Ah, well," murmured Fanny; "I only wish I had one of my own, for all that. At all events, I should not be thrown alone on the wide world, with nobody but that horrid old fat Mr. Fothergill to take care of me. Oh, mama, he is *so* fat! Now, isn't he?"

"No doubt of it, my child; but never mind that: as Mrs. Luttrell says, he is everything that is good. And you'll live like a little princess, my Fanny, and ride about London in that nice coach of his, and be as happy as the day is long. Besides, Fanny, the fact really is, that you will spend almost the whole of your time with Miss Drake, and Lady Sarah: I rather reckon upon their asking you immediately to Curzon-street."

"If I could be sure of that," said Fanny, doubtfully; for the maternal veracity did not stand high in her opinion.

"There can't be a doubt on the subject, my love," said her mother. "Depend on it, you will do little more than sleep in Great George-street; you will be so constantly at the other house. And, as for me, the moment I have satisfied myself about poor Lizzy, I shall be up with you in a jiffey, as our old aunt used to say."

"Yes, but I wish you wouldn't say it, mama, 'cause it's so vulgar."

"Well, my sweetest love, we'll drop the jiffey, if it offends your ears. Anything in reason, I am sure, Fanny, to please you: only dry your eyes, like a dear, good girl, as you can be when you choose it."

“ Yes, mama, but there is one thing you must promise to do for me.”

“ Name it, my darling; you know I have no thought but for your good, my own Fanny.”

“ Well then, mama, you must send me a cake, just as if I were at school, you know. You promised me one on my birthday last half; but it never came: and I think it is very immoral not to keep one’s word; don’t you, Mrs. Luttrell?”

“ Cakes, my precious! Why, you don’t suppose there will be any want of nice things at Mr. Fothergill’s? such beautiful housekeeping as there is in Great George-street—cakes, indeed! Why, it’s the land of cakes.”

“ Yes,” said Fanny, contemptuously; “ but then they are all wholesome! made from a particular receipt of his deceased wife’s—for I heard him say so myself—with no plums; and, oh, mama! not a bit of sweetmeat!”

## CHAPTER X.

THAT evening, certain of the party from Horton, with the addition of Mr. Francis and the young people, strolled down to the Hamiltons' cottage, to pay that visit which civility demanded, and which jealousy pined for. It was so mild, after the late rains, that Mr. Hamilton ventured to await the sunset in the open air. His couch had been drawn under the verandah ; and there the invalid reclined, with his beautiful wife sitting listlessly at his feet, or wandering amongst her flowers.

The passing observer, who might have watched the group that now assembled in that little garden, would never have imagined the anxious hearts that beat amongst them. Mr. Hamilton's meagre form and hollow cheek was all that, to the outward eye, indicated pain or trouble ; and yet—though every breath of his was drawn with difficulty—yet, in the blessed repose of confiding affection, and a spirit of peace with Heaven and all the world, he was a much happier person than some of his company.

From the praise of apparent cheerfulness, how-

ever, we must here except Mr. Mauleverer; who, it was conjectured by those conversant in the ways of Myrtle Cottage, had been lately quarrelling a little with his sister; for, besides looking more sardonic than usual, he seemed fidgety, walking slowly to and fro, and seldom speaking but to contradict. Nor had the little Henrietta any success, in her winning attempts to attract his attention, and induce him to play with her.

"Oh, dearest aunt," said that young lady, presently running up to Mrs. Luttrell, "Mrs. Hamilton was so *very* good the other day, as to say she would play to us on her beautiful new harp: will not that be a very great treat to us all, dear aunt?"

"Sweet child!" said Mr. Hamilton, "what a wonderful taste she has for music!" In his happy blindness to the imperfections of his friends, he held the little Luttrells to be perfect specimens of artless nature.

Mrs. Luttrell, who momentarily dreaded some direct allusion to the late despatches, or her son's last letter, was well pleased to hear her handsome neighbour sing rather than speak; so she readily joined her party in seconding this request, and the instrument was accordingly brought out.

"Do you play the harp, Miss Carew?" said Mrs. Hamilton, as she began tuning it.

Selby answered, "No;" and—weak silly woman that she was—she seized, with avidity, this occasion of displaying their difference of taste; observing that, as she was aware of Mrs. Hamilton's proficiency on both instruments, she might acknowledge, without

rudeness, her own preference for the pianoforte : she had never had the least wish to learn the harp.

Mrs. Hamilton heard her with perfect indifference. "Perhaps then I had better not play ; it may be disagreeable to you ?"

Selby, upon this, sought to qualify her censure, which was captiously seconded by Mauleverer. "The harp," said he, "is a paltry instrument, whatever poets and fools may say in its praise ; poor and meagre : no musical ear can listen to it for ten minutes without satiety. Nay, nay, good people," he continued, as many of the company began deprecating his censure, "I never presumed the rest of the world to be of my way of thinking : I class myself among the scientific few,—a select, and very limited number, amongst which I have no desire to enlist any one against his will." And the reverend gentleman proceeded in his walk, the concluding grumble being dispersed to the evening breezes.

Mrs. Hamilton went on tuning, with a scornful smile. "It was lucky for her," she said, "that she was *not* singular in liking the instrument. There were persons in the world"—this was said with peculiar emphasis—"who had listened to her playing for *rather* longer than ten minutes at a time, without—apparently—finding it tiresome : they *might* be deficient in musical taste, but she rather thought not."

"I dare not trust to my own judgment," said Mr. Hamilton ; "for my partiality to the performer might lead it astray."

"Oh, no," said the lady, interrupting him shortly ;

"you are no judge at all." Miss Carew turned her sparkling eyes full upon Mrs. Hamilton, as she said this. It was not, then, her husband for whose gratification she had chiefly performed.

Perhaps the same thought occurred to Mr. Mauleverer; for, as he advanced again up the little gravel path, he continued his abuse of "that poor jingling instrument." "He objected to it," he asserted, in his sarcastic manner, "on moral grounds: many a girl had been ruined, as a useful member of society, by being taught the harp. Formerly young ladies thought themselves creatures of a superior order, if they could strum a little on the harpsichord,—play 'God Save the King' with both hands, or rattle off 'Nancy Dawson': their poor empty minds were puffed up by the possession of such an accomplishment, and the domestic virtues suffered accordingly. But now the piano, having become a thing-of-course, was no longer to be dreaded as a moral evil; all this mischief was transferred to the harp."

Mrs. Hamilton, who could meet general censure with civil indifference, was always roused by the sneers of her brother; but before she could utter the angry retort that arose to her lips, her husband laid his wasted hand on her arm, saying gently,—

"My Alicia, Frederic is only joking; he cannot seriously mean to wound your feelings: that is impossible."

"I beg your pardon," said she, much excited.

"He knows it is my favourite instrument."

"Only since you have been *abroad*," said Mau-

leverer, as he passed behind her, with a look that would have become Mephistopheles: "till then, you always preferred the nobler instrument. I don't like to see English taste and feeling perverted by foreign manners, and foreign principles."

"How ridiculous, Frederic! to suppose it a national virtue to play one instrument rather than another: you are so provokingly absurd!"

"At that rate," said Mr. Francis, good-humouredly, "had Mrs. Hamilton been a Scotchwoman by birth as well as name, it would plainly have been her bounden duty to accompany her voice with the bagpipe."

The remark was well-timed—it excited a laugh, and put an end to the dispute. The tuning was now over, and Mrs. Hamilton began playing with ease and brilliancy.

Bitter were the sensations with which Selby listened to the performance! She seldom sat down to her piano without recalling those happy days at Quin's Folly, when Luttrell used to hang over her chair, or leaning on the instrument, with his eyes fixed upon her face, listen and admire as long as she chose to play. How often might those scenes have been renewed with the fascinating woman before her! The agony she endured, as the picture rose to her imagination, can only be thoroughly understood by such as have suffered from the self-same cause: the list of such secret sufferers is longer than the world around them suspects; and they, heart-stricken and forlorn, like my poor Selby, will implicitly agree with me, that had she been mourn-



ing over the corpse of her husband, she would have felt less miserably than she did at this moment.

The prelude was followed by a song, and Selby grew critical as it proceeded. Mrs. Hamilton had a voice of power, and much facility of execution ; but there was too marked an expression—too sudden a transition from swelling tones to dying falls : like her reading aloud, the emphasis was often forced and unnatural. The fair Carew's pure taste was all at variance with such a display : in a scene like that, too, so modest and secluded, a style adapted to a concert room seemed singularly misplaced. " How lamentably changed must Hartley be if he could applaud such a performance—a taste so false and meretricious !" as Mrs. Fothergill said of the bees'-wax and turpentine ; and the complexion of our heroine, which had faded under the influence of jealousy, pure and unadulterated, blushed into honest indignation against both the seducer and the seduced. But, presently the bravura was finished ; the lady, resting from her melodious labour, acknowledged with apathetic courtesy, the thanks and praises which were bestowed on her—by every one but her brother and the lovely Carew ; and then, after suffering her fingers to wander over the harp with an air of abstraction, she suddenly looked up, and interrupting a warm panegyric of her husband's, she exclaimed,—

" There, Edward, I sang that to please *you* ; for you pay my voice the compliment of thinking you can't have too much of it. Now,"—and she smiled most softly—" now, I will gratify myself."

Again she sang; but how different was this song from the first! It was a Portuguese air, peculiar, as the music of the country is, and slightly monotonous, but full of melody and sweetness; and she sang it in a low, mellow voice: not without passion certainly, but with a chastened purity of style, such as her late performance gave little indication of her possessing. Selby's eyes grew dim with tears; for every liquid note, so sweet and full of feeling, seemed to tell her of the lost love of her husband: she had no longer even the miserable satisfaction of despising, in his fall, the bad taste that could be lured from its loyalty to her by the ill-disguised blandishments of a second-rate actress. What man, with an eye and an ear for the beautiful, could resist such a being as this!

Unable to conceal her emotion, she strolled away as far as the limits of the garden permitted; and, leaning over the low rails that rustically hemmed in the little dwelling, suffered her tears to flow fast and freely. For plainly could Selby reconcile what to some might seem a riddle—the very different style of Mrs. Hamilton's two songs. The first, with its false graces, had no doubt been her customary mode of singing, till she had been associated with *him*; and then all was changed: through *his* more refined taste, hers had become ennobled; and *he* had instructed her in that part of the science which lies distinct from force of finger or compass of voice. Yes; Selby could well believe, that in this way, the beautiful Alicia had learned much more than any singing-master in the world could have taught her.

A footstep sounded along the pathway, beyond the

paling; apparently one of the servants belonging to the house. Miss Carew, startled from her melancholy musings, raised her eyes as he approached, and they settled on the well-remembered face of Thomas Hodges; once the confidential man of Cornet Luttrell, of the —, now in the service of the Reverend Frederic Mauleverer. The meeting was only what, intruding herself into that vicinity, she ought to have anticipated; but Mrs. Hamilton's brother had been absent from Brackenbury until the last two days, and Selby had forgotten both himself and his follower. Now, the sight of one so intimately associated with the grand history of her life, moved her strangely.

Painfully alive to the danger of being recognised by him, she turned her head immediately, and forthwith moved away; but, even as she did so, was aware that he had touched his hat to her: and, though this might be but the common mark of respect he would pay as he passed any visitor at the Cottage, yet Selby, in her confusion, construed the civility into a proof of his recollecting her as quickly as she had recognised him. Then burst on her the almost inevitable consequences of such an encounter: the tattling which might ensue from house to house, from cottage to hall; the whispered stories of her former intimacy with the heir of Horton, which would gradually ascend from the house-keeper's dominions to Mrs. Luttrell's own dressing-room; the questions that might, nay, must be asked.

"Well," she exclaimed, in the irritation of the moment, "let it be so! Anything rather than the

life I am now leading !” And for a time she actually rejoiced to think that, without being herself instrumental to the discovery, she should be freed at once from the oppressive secret which hung on her soul, as the albatross hung round the neck of the “Ancient Mariner.”

Occupied with this new feature in her strange position, Selby was still wandering aloof from the others, and taking no note of what they were doing, when Mr. Francis, ever mindful of his fair cousin, came seeking her with an elastic step and a smiling countenance. It appeared she was destined that evening not only to recognise an old acquaintance, but to be introduced to a new one. Mr. Pickering had arrived at Horton, and learning the temporary absence of Mrs. Luttrell, had followed her to Myrtle Cottage, to pay his respects and deliver himself as soon as possible of all the London intelligence he knew she was thirsting to hear.

A few steps across the lawn brought Selby within sight of the recent arrival ; and, spite of all her distresses, she could not regard the little man without a feeling of amusement, a certain consciousness of the ludicrous, which would come across her as she recalled the anecdotes, still fresh in her memory, of her husband's old tutor, and observed how very well Hartley's description of him tallied with the figure before her. That air of mingled good-humour and self-sufficiency, the very long chin, and the sharp little eyes that seemed in constant motion under those everlasting spectacles. “Ha, ha ! there was the good little Pickering, sure enough !”

Selby was sure she could have picked him out from among a thousand of the tutor tribe; and as uncle Francis gallantly handed her back into the little circle, anxious to be foremost in making their friend acquainted with this lovely cousin, she smiled so bewitchingly that he was prouder of her than ever. And yet, strange to say, it was not exactly admiration that her lovely presence seemed to inspire in the breast of Mr. Pickering; he was in the full tide of talk, in the midst of home news, when his quick glance caught the approach of a strange lady, and suddenly interrupting himself he inquired,—

“Who’s that, eh? I beg your pardon, what did you say? Carew, eh? Bless me, *what* Carew?”

“Selby Carew, cousin John’s daughter; surely you must have been aware she was staying with us!”

The Reverend Thomas, as Mrs. Luttrell thus explained, turned upon her a look of utter surprise; but the young lady in question being now within hearing he must keep his remarks to himself, and make the bow which good manners required upon a first introduction.

But all who knew Mr. Pickering might plainly see that something unusual was the matter, and that the fair apparition thus suddenly brought before him, was in some way the cause of his disturbance. He eyed her all over, and then looked from one to the other, as if questioning their veracity or his own senses: when he spoke, it was at random; if he laughed, it was in the wrong place.

At last he took Mrs. Luttrell suddenly by the arm, and drawing her aside within the shade of a weeping willow—meet emblem of what was oppressing his faculties!—hurriedly exclaimed,—

“My dear madam, what is the meaning of all this? And what does this young lady do here, and in such a dress?” and he peeped furtively between the drooping branches of the tree.

“Dress, Mr. Pickering! Are you speaking of Miss Carew?”

“Most certainly I am; and I cannot express my wonder at seeing her still amongst you, and not even—” here he bobbed again beneath the willow—“not even with the poor compliment of a black ribbon on any part of her person, that is visible to me at least. Eh! surely,” he continued in increasing excitement,—“surely, my dear Mrs. Luttrell, we have not reached that pass of civilization, or hardness of heart, when the death of one’s nearest of kin is not even to be acknowledged by a mourning suit!”

“Death, Mr. Pickering! What is it you mean?”

“Is it possible you are still ignorant of what has occurred?”

“Oh!” gasped Mrs. Luttrell, “don’t frighten me: is it poor John?”

“No, no; not so bad as that: only his wife!”

“Poor thing! Heavens, how awfully sudden!”

“Sudden, eh? Oh, by no means: a pulmonary complaint which had troubled her for a long time.”

“Ah, that sweet unconscious girl, how little she knows what awaits her! Have the goodness to send my brother to me; and, Mr. Pickering, be cautious.

not to hint anything suddenly to the poor thing herself."

"Why, my dear madam, what has prevented the young lady from knowing all about it?"

"Heaven knows! Mr. Pickering. But send Francis, please. I really am quite unnerved."

Mr. Pickering did as he was bid; but the mysterious air with which he drew Mr. Francis aside could not escape notice: there were odd glances exchanged between the lookers-on, and a whisper arose that bad news must have arrived from London.

"My God!" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, with almost a shriek, "it's something about Hartley Luttrell!" And without a moment's consideration, she rushed after the trio to the end of the garden.

Selby, equally forgetful of appearances, followed her half-way; and then, faltering in her purpose, sat down upon a garden chair, and looked wildly after her. There was an agony of suspense to be endured for a few minutes; but soon the aspect and gestures of the consulting party convinced her that her fears had been misplaced, and she agreed with Mr. Maulverer, though nettled at the sneer with which he said it, "that the mother of *such* a son must needs have been in fits, if she had heard an ill report of him."

Hateful man! what did he mean by sinking into this offensive tone, whenever he alluded to Captain Luttrell? And yet why blame him? This brother of Mrs. Hamilton's, acute of observation, and severely moral, what should hinder him from perceiving the impropriety in her conduct; which, while it escaped her husband's notice, was apparent to every

one else? Yet clear sighted as he evidently was, who could wonder that he should make allowances for a sister, and cast the odium of her guilty levity on the object which had excited it? It might be unjust, but was only too natural, that he should thus paint Captain Luttrell as a systematic seducer, who had sought to undermine the principles of the wife, all the while he was professing a warm and disinterested friendship for the husband.

Leaving the fair Carew to ponder upon these reflections, and many another that might thence accrue, we must follow the Luttrells; whose desire to investigate the strange news Mr. Pickering had brought them, and talk it over amongst themselves, soon broke up the party at Myrtle Cottage. Of course, the only remarkable feature in the affair, was the unaccountable ignorance in which Miss Carew had been left as to the death of her mother: an event, as it seemed of no such recent or sudden occurrence, as to have prevented the information reaching her some days ago: and, indeed, so unaccountable did this omission appear, that it was not until they were certified of the unquestionable source of Mr. Pickering's intelligence, that they would regard it as otherwise than an utter misapprehension of the subject. Mrs. Damer was especially sceptical on this head.

"For who," she observed apart to the others,—  
"who so apt to run away with the whim of another, or a misconception of his own, as our good Pickering? Clever in his way, an excellent scholar no doubt, and quite incapable of retailing a falsehood,



knowing it to be such; but if he *can* make a mistake in name, person, or place, he is sure to do it, and depend on it we shall find out some blunder of his in the present case. Remember in that affair of the Hawkinses, what mischief he would unintentionally have made, if Mr. Luttrell and I had not interfered just in time; and this very day, by-the-bye, I was hearing of a fresh instance of his absence, or thoughtlessness, or whatever it may be termed.

Imagine his christening a baby of the Poppletons (the people down at the farm there) christening it actually by the name of Peter John, though but a minute or two before he had been instructed to call it Patience Maria! Now, how can one give faith to his wonderful stories after that? And observe also, that though he boasts of having had the news from poor John himself (who certainly ought to know whether his wife is alive or dead) yet still he obtained it through a third person, and that person (though he never will own it) getting exceedingly hard of hearing: Lord Elderton ought to have taken to a trumpet six months ago. Here comes the little man, however; and now I'll trouble you all not to interrupt me when I question him a little narrowly."

Mr. Pickering's account of the matter, divested of circumlocution or the interference of listening friends, ran shortly thus:—On his way from London that morning, he had taken the opportunity of paying his respects to a mutual relation of the Luttrells and Carews, whose house happened to stand nearly in the line of his journey. This was the Earl of

Elderton, a rich, old nobleman, who had interested himself a good deal in the early career of John Carew, and, himself an officer high in the service, had been mainly instrumental in deciding the profession of his young relative, and assisting him with his influence at the Admiralty. In pecuniary matters also, he had frequently shewn himself liberal, and might have been more so; but there was a strict morality and a stiffness of address about his noble benefactor, which in his youthful days had discouraged cousin John from applying to him more frequently than he could help.

So little in unison with his own manners were those of Lord Elderton, that it was a convincing proof of the utter emptiness of his purse, and his having failed in every other quarter, whenever he was induced to lay his hand on that aristocratical-looking knocker in Grosvenor-square, and submitted himself to the lectures of his punctilious and rather methodistical kinsman. Here, then, Mr. Pickering had made a formal call on leaving town, and had been detained in an ante-room for nearly twenty minutes; his lordship being, he was informed, engaged with another visitor on private and particular business. This visitor proved to be John Carew, who presently passed through the ante-chamber, where Mr. Pickering was whiling away his time with a book.

"And you spoke to him?" inquired Mrs. Damer, interrupting the narrator at this point. "You accosted him, of course?"

"No, I can't say I did; though now I repent

the omission : but as he hastily passed me, his eyes were intently riveted on the ground ; and to say truth, he looked just then so unusually serious, that for the moment I could hardly make up my mind whether it were really he himself."

Mr. Pickering's audience eyed each other, and Mrs. Damer, adjusting herself in her chair with that aspect of superiority which the incredulous love to assume, said decidedly, "That was not John; you must have mistaken the man altogether: rely upon it, your near-sightedness misled you, Mr. Pickering; that was no John Carew: you who know him so well, could under no circumstances have doubted his identity."

"I beg your pardon, my dear madam, but even your penetration might have been at fault, had you beheld him as I did: he whose characteristic on other occasions is a light step, and an easy careless vivacity—see such a man with his hat slouched, his head drooping, and his face twice the length it usually is, and I would defy even you, Mrs. Damer (and I know not one of your sex more ready-witted), to recognise him at a moment's notice. But the sequel shews that I was not mistaken in my man."

Mr. Pickering then went on to relate, that when admitted to Lord Elderton's presence, he found him also labouring under considerable emotion, the result of his interview with Mr. Carew; which he described to have been of a very painful character, as poor cousin John was almost heart-broken at the loss of his wife, whose death, occurring about

a week ago, he had come expressly to communicate.

"I must have felt for him," said his lordship, "in any case; but there were circumstances attending *his* loss (to you, Mr. Pickering, I scruple not to mention them), which renders it more than commonly distressing. It is bad enough, my good sir," proceeded Lord Elderton, who was himself a widower of but six months standing,—“quite trying enough to see the creature you love best in the world sinking gradually before your eyes, even when you are able to administer to her wishes and requirements in every respect; but what must it be?—how difficult for the most advanced Christian to bear the trial becomingly—when the degrading reflection forces itself upon you, that your poverty prevents your paying her the last offices of humanity with common decency!

"Poor man! I don't go quite the lengths he does, as regards funereal observances; for his feelings on that point are morbidly sensitive: as to the exact minutiae, therefore, proper in his case, we should probably differ; but in my poor, afflicted relation, light-hearted as I have generally seen him, and light-minded as I have often suspected him of being, this scrupulous regard to decorum shews him in a new and not ungraceful light. I own I had not given him credit for the sort of feeling he now displays: his passionate desire to fulfil every duty to the departed. I did hint the propriety in his case of a walking funeral; but I saw the suggestion grated sorely against the nobler tendencies of his nature, and therefore said no more: though I still think

a second mourning coach might have been dispensed with. It grieves me now to think that I did not meet poor Carew's requirements rather more frankly, when he applied for my assistance some little time ago ; but really, Mr. Pickering, I had, till the conversation of this morning, no suspicion of the actual extent of his embarrassments : he confesses now that it was a spirit of false delicacy that prevented his explaining himself more fully.

This was the substance of Mr. Pickering's conversation with Lord Elderton ; who, however, had taken that opportunity of dilating at some length on a subject so peculiarly exciting to his personal feelings : for it appeared that poor Mrs. Carew had died of precisely the same complaint as that which had proved fatal to the late Lady Elderton.

"It was a pulmonary disorder, ending in galloping consumption," said his lordship, sighing deeply ; "and the symptoms so like those of my poor Selina !" Here he looked sadly at the opposite wainscot, where hung a full length portrait of her ladyship. "Hour by hour, day by day, the same melancholy progress ! We compared our experiences, Mr. Pickering—my poor cousin and I—and there was such a striking resemblance in the heart-rending details, that you must not wonder to see me a little shaken this morning. I do not often give way to unavailing grief ; but poor John Carew and his sad story have been almost too much for my fortitude."

Mr. Pickering tendered his gravest sympathy ; secretly resolving, for the future, to contradict the

report he knew to be current in town, that the earl was paying particular attention to a lady young enough to be his granddaughter. He also expressed his surprise that Mr. Luttrell had not been made acquainted with the mournful occurrence; but Lord Elderton easily accounted for this omission of etiquette: the embarrassments under which Carew was labouring might, he thought, in addition to his severe affliction, have rendered him careless of the usual observances.

"For Carew's is no common case of distress. It is a circumstance, Mr. Pickering, I should not think of mentioning, if you were not so intimate a friend of our connections in Great George-street; but so destitute is poor John of ready money, that his wife is, at this moment, lying unburied, because"—lowering his voice to a solemn whisper—"he possesses not the means of paying for her coffin!"

Pickering, all aghast, blamed him for not applying betimes to his relations; to whom, in former times, he had been ready enough to apply. "False modesty," he gently hinted, "had never seemed to him the failing of Mr. Carew: but there was no saying what influence the vicissitudes of life might have had upon his character."

"Exactly so!" was the reply. "The lessons of adversity have not, as you say, been thrown away. It is easy to see that my poor kinsman is an altered man; and I trust, under the blessing of Providence, to be one day the humble instrument of bringing him to a still more satisfactory state. There is, indeed, no doubt, that on this trying occasion he has

displayed a refinement of feeling foreign to our general ideas of his character: though what are we, Mr. Pickering, that we should presume to read the heart of our fellow-sinner?" &c. &c. "He himself candidly acknowledged his error, attributing it to a species of false and worldly pride. 'I might have forced myself,' he said, 'to be a beggar on any other occasion; but to ask charity for such a purpose as this!' and then—poor fellow!—his voice and composure totally failed him: and really, my good sir, I know not which of us was most deeply affected."

"But," said Mr. Pickering, who, recovering from his first surprise, and having no wife either above or below the earth's surface, could not be expected to view the subject in a manner entirely sentimental—"but what has become of Mrs. Carew's fortune? the money that was left her by her uncle. It has always been understood that she was able to maintain herself and her daughter in a very genteel, if not liberal manner."

"Ah! there it is!" said Lord Elderton. "I find, from Carew, that we have been quite mistaken as to their circumstances: his wife had a life income—merely that, he tells me—and though sufficient for her occasions, it has been already exceeded to an amount he is actually afraid to inquire into. He touched upon that part of the subject with such evident reluctance, that I forbore at this painful—I may say *awful* moment, to press it further. But, from all I could gather, it is evident to me that there has been most culpable extravagance on the part of Mrs. Carew: in fact, there has been a seizure of her

effects ; and he is naturally anxious to get this part of the affair—so disgraceful to her memory, and derogatory to all concerned—hushed up as quickly as possible. Of course, I gave him what was necessary for this purpose, as well as for defraying the expenses of the funeral ; specifying that it was to be conducted in the simplest manner consistent with gentility, and promising further assistance when he shall have called in his wife's debts. Nor do I doubt that our good friend, Mr. Luttrell, will join me in coming forward to help our mutual relation."

Mr. Pickering readily answered for his patron contributing his share towards the decent burial of the late Mrs. Carew, and so he took his leave.

The fulness of these particulars could leave no reasonable doubt of the truth of Mr. Pickering's report. Mrs. Damer, indeed, was the only one who still looked unconvinced ; for it was easier for her to impute everything to the bungling propensities of the reverend narrator, than to account, in any natural manner, for the state of ignorance in which, not only the Luttrells—his distant relations—but Carew's own child had been left : so she kept scrutinizing his facts, and questioning his inferences ; alluding pointedly to Lord Elderton's want of an ear-trumpet, and more than once slyly hinting at that awkward affair of the infant Poppleton, till poor Mr. Pickering grew almost angry ; and it was only his moral conviction that he must, in the nature of things, soon establish his statement without a doubt, and gain a complete triumph over that obstinate and satirical old lady, that



enabled him to preserve the good humour for which he was generally renowned.

Then there was a marked difference of opinion between Miss Luttrell and her father upon the expediency or otherwise of acquainting Miss Carew immediately with the death of her mother. Esther, who had *filial* reasons for longing to get rid of this fair cousin, would have apprised her instantly of the report, and despatched her back to Bath—the supposed scene of Mrs. John’s demise—by the earliest conveyance ; while Mr. Francis objected to having the melancholy intelligence broken to her, until her desolate condition should be established beyond the faintest shadow of doubt.

“At all events,” he urged, “let us wait till to-morrow’s post ; when, if no letter arrives from either John or the executors, we can consider farther what is most proper and kind to be done.”

And this course being advocated by his tender-hearted sister-in-law, it was finally agreed to ; and the little family conclave in Mrs. Damer’s dressing-room broke up.

Fanny Marsham—who, together with Mr. Fothergill, had been carefully excluded from any participation in this mysterious matter—perceived, nevertheless, with all the quickness of her inquisitive nature, that something more than ordinary was in agitation.

“What could they all be whispering and looking so wise for ? I know very well,” said she, “there’s a secret somewhere about something ; though even mama won’t tell it me, which I call being very un-

kind. Oh! Miss Carew, do you know what it's about?"

"What does it signify to us, Fanny? *We* are neither of us concerned in it, whatever it may be."

"I'm not so sure of *that*," said Fanny; "for as I was listening just now I heard your name distinctly—and that was all I could hear."

"*My* name!" exclaimed Selby, flushing up, and looking disturbed: but a moment's reflection calmed the sudden beating of her heart; for if any horrid revelation had by strange chance occurred, she would by this time be very, *very* differently treated.

And now it struck her that, preoccupied as their minds seemed to be, her husband's family had never shewn themselves kinder to her, or more tenderly respectful. No! as surely as that dreadful secret came to light, all such marks of favour would be over. Every member of a circle now become so dear to her would shun her as an object of scorn, and Mrs. Luttrell's aversion to Mrs. Hamilton would all be transferred to her! Yet still from this painful picture—this family tableau of fierce indignation or cold contempt—Selby always excepted uncle Francis: she never could or would bring herself to believe that he would be otherwise than indulgent to her to the end of time.

## CHAPTER XI.

MRS. LUTTREL, with Hartley ever foremost in her thoughts, was always anxious about the arrival of her letters; so that Selby felt no surprise at the frequent allusions that were made the next morning to the lateness of the post. She could not, however, help noticing that Mr. Pickering seemed quite as fidgety on this point as any of the party, inquiring two or three times if it were quite certain that the letters had been sent for as usual; and again was he assured (of what, indeed, the little man was perfectly aware) that George Green, the gardener's son, went down every morning, as his regular duty, on the white mare.

"And many an extra fee, to be in time, does he get from me," said Mrs. Luttrel, "when I am expecting anything of importance. This morning especially," casting a pitiful look at Selby, "I bade them charge him to be punctual. My dear Miss Carew, I do not see you eat. I must have you make a good breakfast this morning; indeed, I must! I have often wished that I were myself a better breakfast-eater. Something a little substan-

tial at the opening of the day is so proper, so necessary for us ; for we none of us know the occasion we may have for all our strength and fortitude before it closes on us."

And Mrs. Luttrell, ending with a sigh, gazed at her young guest with such mournful earnestness, while she pressed her hospitality upon her, that Selby, half embarrassed, tried to laugh away the subject.

"You should have lived in the times of good Queen Bess, ma'am, and not in these degenerate days of tea and toast."

"A very fair rejoinder—eh, ma'am?" said Mr. Pickering, who, with all that were in the secret, thought his patroness was getting a little too solemn. "Who knows but there might have been more philosophy, or foresight, to say the least of it, in those ponderous breakfasts of our ancestors, than we give them credit for? Those were 'parlous' times, as the dramatists express it: periods teeming with strange vicissitudes, and sudden turns of fortune; and our wise forefathers may have thought that they could better stand a summons before the Privy Council, or a citation from the Star Chamber, if they began the day with a reasonable—or, perhaps, an unreasonable—stock of pasty and strong ale. Eh? Who knows? Ha, ha!"

"And yet," said Selby, "we must beware that our theory throws no slight upon modern times. In spite of their light breakfasts, our men are not less brave than those that fought at Cressy, or the plains of Agincourt. Do you think they are, sir?"

And she appealed to him with a conscious blush ;

for, in truth, her words were spoken in somewhat of a Hamiltonian spirit.

"True, madam; quite true. I grant you, the race is the same; at least, we have the same mental qualities—'the will to do, the soul to dare:' but, then, think of the physical power—Eh?—the muscles, the sinews, that were called into action! Look at those coats of mail, and fancy their wearers beginning the toils of the day on coffee and muffins! I think, Mrs. Luttrell, that even our friend Hartley,—who is, I assure you, ma'am," turning to Selby, "as fine a specimen of an Englishman of the present day as you would find anywhere—Captain Luttrell, you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, I will venture to say, that, well grown as he is, and skilled in all martial and manly exercises, he would find himself awkwardly circumstanced if he were called into action in a full suit of plate armour. Eh? Don't you agree with me? Ha, ha! He would prefer, in such a case, to undertake his duty upon something rather more efficient than the effeminate beverage that is so peaceably steaming before us. And thus it is," and Mr. Pickering sipped complacently his own effeminate beverage; "time, you see, and the adaptation of circumstances—Eh?—That is it. The invention of gunpowder—to that we can trace it all: it has changed the face of the battle-field, and brought in tea and toast for breakfast. But don't I see? Yes, certainly; here come the letters."

And starting from the table with infinite agility,

the little man met the messenger half way, and, hastily opening the bag, cast his spectacled eyes, like lightning, over its contents. For, superadded to his native curiosity, and some compassion for the fair creature who sat there so unconscious of the shock that awaited her, Mr. Pickering perceived his own character to be at stake ; and unless his report from town was confirmed by this day's post, he should be liable to the sarcastic bantering of Mrs. Damer till the arrival of the next. Luckily for him, it was the old lady's custom to remain in her own apartments till the afternoon ; but she had already sent a message to inquire if any letters had arrived that morning : which shewed that the disputed subject was still engrossing her thoughts. Mr. Pickering, therefore, with all his pity, experienced no small exultation when, amongst half a dozen others, a letter directed to Miss Carew actually came to light. The seal, to be sure, was not the colour he expected ; but a hundred things might account for that. So he presented it to her, with an air of respectful condolence, and a shrug at the ladies, which was responded to with that sort of pitiful look which said,—“ Ah ! poor thing ! She little knows ! ” And though they made a show of opening their own letters, their eyes and attention were fixed wholly upon hers.

In vain did Mr. Fothergill, whose journey home was to commence that morning, and who was anxiously awaiting, from his housekeeper, the latest intelligence relative to aired beds and renovated carpets, ask nervously if there was *no* letter for him ? Surely Hoskins must have written, according to his

express desire, to let him know how things were going on in Great George-street, and if everything was duly prepared for the reception of himself and a visitor. Here Fanny looked daggers at her mother, and began to cry.

"Mr. Pickering, I think you will find a letter. Hoskins is always so *very* correct."

Nobody heard a syllable of his tremulous harangue, while the simple words, "From my mother," which were murmured by Miss Carew as she received her letter, struck home to the very hearts of the trio who were already possessed with the painful news it no doubt contained.

"No, not from *her*, I fear, my love," whispered Mrs. Luttrell, very tenderly, the tears filling her eyes as she spoke.

While Mr. Pickering, with a sepulchral tone, muttered, "No, no; *that* is impossible!"

Totally unsuspecting of the attention she was exciting, Selby read on; and, to the surprise of her watchful friends—we hope we must not also add, to the disappointment of Mr. Pickering—she neither wept nor exclaimed: and yet the mysterious epistle was not perused without a certain change of countenance and complexion; for, though still enigmatical, its tendency was strangely alarming.

"I know"—it was thus Mrs. Carew expressed herself—"I know you will be vexed at my still withholding from you the cause of my late uneasiness, and of my removal hither" (for, to Selby's infinite surprise, the letter was dated from the Adelphi Hotel, London); "but whether it be weakness of

mind, or a sense of decency that prevents me, I cannot force myself to relate the odious particulars till something more certain transpire, or till we meet.

“All that is at present necessary, is to prepare you for the possible occurrence of something inexpressibly revolting to both of us; and as an exposure such as I fear to be impending would be doubly distressing to you where you now are, I think it advisable you should either return to Stukely, or join me immediately in town. The latter step, I believe, I should enforce as preferable, were it not, my dear Selby, that I distrust my own motives in giving the advice. My desire to have you with me just now may possibly blind me to all but selfish considerations; so if you like to return to those good old Wollastons, and there await another letter from me, do so without any reference to my feelings. Perhaps it might be the best course to pursue: but, at all events, let nothing induce you to remain at Horton a day longer.”

A shudder ran through Selby's frame as she read these words. What could be this appalling secret that was to be so carefully hidden from the Luttrels? Her eyes still lingered on the mysterious lines, the sentence of expulsion from all that had become so very dear to her; hesitating, not because she was doubtful of the line of action to be followed, but simply because her heart was sinking so fast that she had hardly strength to speak. And her discomposure was so evident to the observing trio, that Mrs. Luttrell took out her pocket-handkerchief, and Mr. Pickering, as he hovered about the ladies, whispered



Mrs. Marsham, — “ Dead, to a certainty ! ” At length, with a sigh and a struggle, Selby arose from the table, and, mutely inviting Mrs. Luttrell to follow her to the window, she there explained the necessity she was under of leaving Horton, and joining her mother as speedily as possible.

It was exactly the announcement Mrs. Luttrell expected to hear. In all that was occurring, she could plainly read the paternal kindness of that warm-hearted cousin John. Anxious to spare the feelings of his child, he had merely added a post-script to the letter. Mrs. Carew had been able to write to her before the awful termination of her illness, and, intending to break the painful news in person, had summoned her as to a bed of sickness, and not, as the unconscious girl would ultimately discover, to the house of death and mourning. And so prepossessed was Mrs. Luttrell with this solution of whatever might seem perplexing in the affairs of the Carew family, that she asked no question on the subject ; but addressed herself, without a moment’s delay, to the obvious duty of expediting the immediate departure of her guest.

Mrs. Luttrell was not generally fond of applying the word Providential to the ordinary occurrences of human life, and yet she was half tempted to use it now, when she bethought her of that unappropriated seat in Mr. Fothergill’s travelling carriage ; the roomy vehicle being at that critical moment in its way from the coach-house to the Hall door, and the vacant place yawning, as it were, for an occupant. To the respectable escort of the old widower she could have

no scruple of consigning her young relative : he would be delighted to have such a companion for Fanny Marsham ; she, by the same pleasing addition to their party, would be consoled for her mama's defalcation, and thus all difficulties as to the journey would be removed effectually.

"And if"—pursued Mrs. Luttrell, after mentioning the plan to Selby—"if you should find, on reaching town, that you are differently situated from what you had reason to expect ; if, in short, you are in any difficulty, or at any time seem to require more than your good father's direction and assistance, remember, my dear Miss Carew, that our house is always open to you, and that you may rely on having a friend and protector in Mr. Luttrell."

Selby turned very pale, and, instead of the acknowledgments that might have been looked for, upon such an offer from the lady of Horton Hall to a poor and obscure relation, she answered not a single word.

Mrs. Luttrell, to whom the source of this emotion was unrevealed, saw in it only a natural sorrow at leaving Horton and the friends she had made there ; and had there been time for any such demonstration, she would willingly have joined her sweet, young cousin in weeping over their sudden separation : but precious moments were on the wing, so with only one warm squeeze of the hand, by way of sympathetic expression, she proceeded to negotiate matters with Mr. Fothergill, who was now beginning to look at his watch, and inquire if his coach had not yet come round.

As Mrs. Luttrell had foreseen, her arrangement met with no difficulty from him ; indeed, so pleased was he to secure himself against the tedium and constraint of a *tête-à-tête* all the way to London with Fanny Marsham, that he lost all the nervous hesitation with which he usually received any sudden proposition, and hurrying up to Miss Carew, pressed her to accompany him with eager politeness; promising that, even if he himself were too fatigued to proceed further than Great George-street on their arrival in town, he would despatch a confidential servant who should see her safely consigned to the protection of her friends. Fanny's sulky face lighted up at the prospect of such an addition to their travelling party; and her alert mama immediately ran off, ringing every bell in her progress, to summon the trio of lady's-maids to aid and assist in packing Miss Carew's boxes without a moment's delay.

As no hint of the report concerning her mother had been suffered to reach Selby, she was of course ignorant of any particular motive her kind friends might have in wishing to send her to London; and it was therefore with a surprise not wholly free from mortification, that she observed the readiness with which her sudden proposal of leaving Horton Hall was received by all its assembled inmates, and the haste and facility which governed the preliminaries of her immediate transportation. Feeling herself half bewildered by an event to her so unlooked for, she had naturally expected its announcement would create some corresponding emotion on the part of those who, up to the present moment, had seemed

to value her society ; and now, struck by the absence of any such flattering demonstration, she was impressed by the humiliating idea that she had unconsciously outstayed her welcome, and was no longer wanted at Horton.

The slightest suspicion of such a feeling on the part of the Luttrels impelled her to instant exertion ; and as, blushing with wounded pride and some little resentment, she was hurrying from the breakfast parlour, she was followed into the hall by Mrs. Luttrell ; who embraced her indeed as fondly as ever, with blessings on her lips, and even tears in her eyes ; but still without breathing one word of encouragement to her to prolong her stay : no delicate enquiry as to the cause of her departure, or questioning the necessity of it being so immediate ; no gentle persuasion, no interceding for “ only one day more ! ” as even the coldest politeness demands on occasions like these.

To be regarded in the light of an unwelcome guest, an intruder at Horton, lent wings to the movements of the fair Carew : every soft regret and enervating reflection that might have seduced her into lingering, ere she bade adieu to that house and its beloved mistress, were merged in one ardent desire to quit it on the instant ; and Mr. Fothergill, fidgety as he was, and anxious to be off, would have found no fault with the alacrity of her proceedings, as she seconded the united efforts of the lady’s-maids, Mrs. Marsham, and Fanny. The latter was now radiant with good humour, and the fun of what *she* called “ helping to pack ; ” which help consisted

mainly in her seizing everything that came to hand, and squeezing it remorsefully into any available corner, where by dint of main strength, she could force it ; while poor Selby, with affected gaiety and an aching heart, seemed to encourage her in her mirth and mischief, and to be equally regardless of her own finery, and the grave remonstrances which were poured forth by the bevy of waiting-women, on an occasion so trying to their professional feelings.

"Oh, Miss Carew, ma'am, let me lay that a little straight."

"Oh, fie, Miss Marsham ! If you haven't put your finger through that beautiful lace of your cousin's."

"Never mind, Betty, I'll give her some better than that when we get to London ; for I've got lots of money, and mama's to give me whatever I ask for besides : ain't you, mama ?"

In the mean while Mr. Pickering had been summoned to the presence of Mrs. Damer. That gentleman had, as we have hinted, watched the course of events with something more than the interest of a mere spectator. Good little man ! but inconsistent as mortal mould must ever be : he would not have crushed a fly deliberately, or have hurt the feelings of any living soul, and yet there cannot be a doubt that his spirits were all the better that morning, from the persuasion that Miss Carew's London letter contained the melancholy announcement, if not actually of her mother's death, yet at least of her being given over by the physicians. He no longer feared being stigmatized for a muddle-

headed babbler, a disseminator of false reports and impossible marvels. He and Lord Elderton might here defy the ridicule of Mrs. Damer; the earl's ear-trumpet, and the Poppleton-baby would rest in peace for the present: and so, for once enlivened by the misfortunes of others, the Reverend Thomas was making his way towards the very interior of grandmama's somewhat exclusive dominions, when he found that, in the impatience of her nature, she had anticipated his approach, and was coming forth to meet him half way.

There stood the old lady, her *deshabille* of snowy muslin flowing about her majestic person, and her head shrouded in what to uninitiated man must have seemed one huge interminable frizzle of Valenciennes lace. She was leaning over the balusters of a back staircase, which gave access from her rooms to the upper garden and the terrace, where she took her early walk. But on this morning, talking rather than walking was her aim; and her clear, high voice sounding over Mr. Pickering's head, arrested his further progress.

"Well, Mr. Pickering," she inquired, "what news this morning? Is our poor cousin really a widower, or is he not?"

To which her informant replied, with inward cheerfulness, but a hypocritical shake of the head,—“There can't be a doubt of it, my dear madam; for I am sorry to say poor Miss Carew has just had a letter, summoning her instantly to London, and she goes up with Mr. Fothergill: a very nice arrangement for all parties. Eh? I left Mrs. Luttrell settling

everything with the old gentleman, who seems quite charmed——”

“Never mind about him,” interrupted Mrs. Damer—who had the utmost contempt for the timid, helpless character of the old widower, and always kept as much aloof from him and his insipid concerns as decent civility would permit,—“tell me what you know about John and this poor woman?”

The shadow of death falling on the sharp edges of Mrs. Damer’s prejudice, had worn them down for the nonce, and “that odious Mrs. John,” had quietly merged into a “poor woman.”

“Oh!” replied Mr. Pickering, with somewhat less readiness, “nothing very material, I fancy, has yet come to light—that is to say, none of the particulars.”

“Well, but, Mr. Pickering, you *must* know by this time, whether that story of yours is correct.”

“Oh, perfectly correct,” said he, resolutely. “Yes, yes, there can’t be a doubt of that; but Miss Carew is not very communicative: overwhelmed, probably, with such a shock; and then, considering the unfortunate state of affairs, the execution, and so forth, between ourselves, ma’am, it is hardly to be expected she should enter much into particulars, poor young lady! Eh?”

Mrs. Damer, from her exalted station, surveyed the little man with a fixed eye, as he fidgeted about upon the lowest step of the staircase.

“Then, I am to understand that Carew’s wife is actually dead?” asked she; and with the plain question, she descended two stairs, as if she was

resolved, physically as well as morally, to come to the point at once; while her interlocutor, rendered desperate by circumstances, returned a bold affirmative.

"Dead, decidedly, my dear madam, rely on it: that is a melancholy fact; but," he continued, adroitly edging off, for he espied a lucky diversion, "I think I see Mr. Francis coming along the terrace. Eh? I'll just open the garden door for him, if you'll excuse me a moment."

Mr. Francis and his ladies, for Esther and Mrs. Grey were following close upon his track, were coming up thus early to the great house, ostensibly to pay their parting compliments to Mr. Fothergill; but their real object might be easily surmised, from the tenor of their conversation by the way: for as they brushed away the dew which a reluctant sun had not yet dispelled, the two friends were gravely canvassing the depth of mourning which it would be proper for the Luttrels to put on for poor Mrs. John; and by the time the last step of the terrace-walk was surmounted, they had come to the conclusion that broad hems would be utterly absurd for so distant a relation, and with regard to trimmings, nothing on earth but "love" would be necessary. "Love!" it was certainly the first time in her life that Esther Luttrell had pronounced that word in conjunction with the name of cousin John's wife.

Slightly absorbed as they were in the question, the ladies, who were a few steps in the rear of Mr. Francis, had failed to observe what had struck him



particularly, as having undoubted affinity with the subject in hand; for on entering the garden by a private path from the Lodge, he happened to cast his eye towards the Park (at that point partially visible) and saw distinctly a post-chaise driving up to the Hall gate. At once it occurred to him that the occupant of this vehicle, could be no other than the object of their late solicitude, Mr. Carew himself. That bereaved gentleman had probably arrived from town too late on the previous evening to disturb the family at the Hall, but had driven over early from ——— to disclose his melancholy news, and especially to break it in person to his daughter.

The matter appeared self-evident, and was immediately acceded to by all who heard it; Mr. Pickering was particularly struck with its probability: "The very thing I was going to observe," said he, "when you mentioned having seen a chaise in the avenue: Mr. Carew himself, you see, ma'am," addressing himself to Mrs. Damer, in a triumphant tone, as he adapted his voice to her elevated position; "so you see this melancholy subject can be no longer a question of doubt;" but Mrs. Damer's quick ears and ready comprehension had caught the idea at the first whisper.

"Of course, it is John!" said she, descending the staircase as she spoke. "Poor fellow! whatever she may have been, he was truly attached to her, and will feel her loss very deeply: for John Carew, with all his foibles, has an affectionate disposition. Poor John! Well, we must make much of him, and see

what is to be done for him in a pecuniary way : that is all we have now to think of."

"And now, of course," said Mr. Pickering, "there will no longer be any necessity for Miss Carew's going to town with Mr. Fothergill."

"Why? was there any idea of her going with him?" inquired Mr. Francis, rather quickly.

"Oh, yes, that was a settled thing, consequent upon a letter which she received this morning; and which, I imagine, as she still seemed ignorant of what had occurred, must have been of anterior date : detained by some error at the post-office."

"Ah, very likely : but now, of course, she will remain here for the present."

"Oh, dear, no!" said Miss Luttrell; "she had much better return to Bath with her father, or wherever he may be going when he leaves this."

"Why, upon my word, Esther, if their affairs are in the unpleasant predicament Lord Elderton describes——"

"Yes, truly!" chimed in Mr. Pickering; "an execution in a house is an awkward thing for a young lady to return to."

"Oh! Mr. Pickering! if she and her mother have been going on for years in the extravagant manner you say they have, this young woman must have been witness to strange scenes before now : the sight of a sheriff's officer is nothing new to her, I dare say."

"Oh, Esther!" exclaimed her father; "how can you look into that sweet innocent face, and judge her so harshly?"

“ And what has her face to do with the question ? ’ replied Miss Luttrell, with a warmth she could not repress. “ Ah, sir ; how often must I repeat again— though I know the remark displeases you—that if this Selby Carew, or any other pretty person who now pleases your eye, could be suddenly seamed with smallpox, or shrivelled with age, I should probably be the more lenient of the two in judging of her merits ; and should most likely be the one to afford her the most substantial assistance.”

Mr. Francis Luttrell’s excellent temper, for such it might be fairly called in general, would scarcely have borne, unruffled, so pointed a reproach as this ; when the sight of a servant crossing the further end of the passage in which the conference was proceeding, drew the attention of all into the old channel, and so put an end to the dangerous dispute. He was hailed immediately.

“ Baxter, who is that ? It is Mr. Carew ? is it not ? ”

“ I beg your pardon, sir,” and the old man advanced within hearing.

“ Somebody arrived in a post-chaise just now ; do you happen to know who it is ? ”

“ Yes, sir,” was the answer. “ It is Mrs. Carew.”

“ *Mr.* Carew you mean, Baxter,” said some one, condescending to set him right as to the sex of the visitor.

“ No, I don’t, ma’am,” said Baxter ; “ I mean Mrs. Carew ; ” and then observing that his audience looked at each other with a smile of incredulity and derision, the petted old servant testily remarked, “ that he had some right to know who the lady was,

as he had opened the hall door to her himself, and was just going to announce her to his mistress."

"A lady calling herself Carew." The words were echoed from mouth to mouth in every tone of surprise.

"Baxter, are you sure you have not made some mistake?"

"Quite sure, sir—I'm positive of it: she asked to see master, and when I told her he was away, she said my mistress would do as well; but she was going to London on particular business, and must see one of the family before she went." Here Mrs. Damer, catching the eye of her reverend friend, burst into that hearty, yet satirical, laughter so annoying to his feelings.

"Very well, Baxter, that will do," said he; and as the old man turned off to do his errand, he whispered, "a mistake, evidently. Baxter grows very hard of hearing: I have observed it frequently of late."

"Yes," retorted Mrs. Damer; "he wants an ear-trumpet, like another of our old friends. Ah, Mr. Pickering, Mr. Pickering! this will be a sad joke against you and your London reporter: unless you can prove this strange visitor to be the ghost of Mrs. John, your credibility is gone for ever, my good sir!" and again that provoking laugh resounded along the gallery.

"Well, well, we shall see; we shall see," he replied, forcing a smile, as he retreated after the rest; who were hurrying off, eager to unravel the mystery, and forestal Baxter in announcing it to his mistress."

"Certainly," said Miss Luttrell, "there must be

something very peculiar about these Carews, that one can never tell to a positive certainty whether they are alive or dead."

"At all events, Esther," was Mrs. Grey's rejoinder, "it is lucky Mrs. John has made her appearance in person before the family put up another monument in the church, *vis-à-vis* to that of her husband: ha, ha!"

"No, no, Mrs. Grey, we have made ourselves ridiculous by one '*hic jacet*,' and shall be cautious for the future how we venture on another to the memory of a Carew."

Mrs. Luttrell's surprise at hearing of this early visitor was absorbed in a still stronger and more personal feeling: she was seized with a sort of nervous dread of encountering one who had of old been so formidable to her imagination, as Mrs. John Carew. She had ever been used to regard her as a virago, whose acquired refinement would be quickly overborne by her real violence and presumption of character; and her coming at this uncereemonious hour, and introducing herself with so urgent a message, shewed she intended no visit of mere compliment. "What can she have to say to me?" she cried, growing red and agitated. "Francis, you must go in with me; I cannot face her alone: or Esther, perhaps?"

"Not I!" exclaimed her niece, with a gesture of disgust; "she is *your* visitor: none of mine, thank goodness!"

"My dear Isabella," expostulated Mr. Francis, "what can there be to alarm you in Mrs. Carew? I

am sure there is nothing in the manners of her daughter, to make you suppose that she herself is otherwise than a quiet, well-bred person."

"And in the next place, do not be too sure that this lady is the person in question," said Mr. Pickering. "With due respect to Mrs. Damer," looking round to ascertain that she was not at his elbow, "I cannot easily believe that both Lord Elderton and myself should have been so egregiously deceived: surely her own husband must have known whether she was alive?"

"At all events, why not send Miss Carew in to her?" said Mrs. Grey. "If it is her mother, she is a very proper person to receive her: perhaps it is only her daughter she wants to see, after all." The suggestion was seized and acted on instantly, and a messenger was despatched to summon the young lady to the presence of her redoubtable parent.

The astonishment, amounting in her case also to consternation, with which Selby heard that the mother whom she was preparing to meet seventy miles off, was at that very moment in the house, can hardly be described. "She must have left London immediately after the despatch of her letter, and have travelled all night! What could it be that had occurred so suddenly, and occasioned a journey so evidently unpremeditated; when she wrote to her daughter scarcely four-and-twenty hours before? What form of human misfortune could have brought her, voluntarily, into a place and society she had hitherto prided herself on avoiding?"

In Selby's circumstances, it was perhaps no unna-

tural thing that her thought should point at once to Hartley Luttrell as the moving cause of this strange step: some news in which he was intimately concerned—bad news, no doubt! Or (for on this point Selby had no reliance on her mother's prudence or propriety) she might have been embittered by some additional correspondence with her son-in-law, and be come to Horton to revenge herself on him and his relations, by revealing that fatal secret which had cast a deadly shade over the best years of her daughter's life.

Though trembling and turning icy cold as this idea predominated, Selby hastened down-stairs; for she dreaded beyond all things that Mrs. Carew should come in contact with the Luttrells before she had previously seen her. Even in her hurry, however, she noticed, as she passed the open door of the breakfast-room, that the party she had left were still there. Mrs. Luttrell and her brother-in-law threw themselves in her way, with expressions no doubt most pertinent to the occasion; but the "fair Carew" was far too much disordered to gather the sense of what they said. She was possessed with the apprehension that they would offer to accompany her to the presence of her mother, and kept repeating, almost wildly,—“It is me, of course, she wishes to see: my mother can be here for no other purpose.”

Her agitation was so marked, that Mr. Francis offered her the support of his arm in crossing the hall; and, for the first time in their acquaintance, Selby would fain have repelled his civilities, suspicious as she was of what might be his further intention.

But she did him less than justice in supposing he would force himself upon the confidence of either mother or daughter, curious as he might be to penetrate the mystery of their present proceedings: at the drawing-room door her hand was resigned, her conductor fell back with the bow of a Grandison, and she entered alone. Uncle Francis returned, in a musing attitude, to the wondering circle in the breakfast parlour; but they had little time for further conjecture, for in a very few moments Miss Carew came smiling into the room, with a countenance so changed, that a stranger would hardly have recognised her for the pale trembling figure that had lately left it.

"Such a ridiculous mistake!" said she.

"A mistake, eh?" cried Mr. Pickering, whisking at once out of the sulky reserve, in which, standing somewhat apart he had remained, drumming on the back of a chair. "Did you say a mistake, ma'am?"

"Oh, yes! a total misapprehension. It is not my mother, after all."

"Of course, it is not!" murmured he, triumphantly: "I never thought it was."

"Such a strange person!" said Selby, laughing; "she calls herself Carew; but I am not anxious to allow the relationship: she is *so* odd! so intensely vulgar! *so* unlike mama!"

Miss Luttrell here gave her old companion a glance "significant of much," while Selby's kinder friends noticed her fond allusion to the parent she was never to behold again, with tender compunction; and the Reverend Thomas slid out of the room, and went to tell Mrs. Damer "all about it."



“ But,” continued Selby, “ she insists on seeing you, ma’am.”

“ My dear Miss Carew, what *is* her business here ?”

“ Oh, I know nothing of that : I came away the moment I had discovered my absurd blunder, and had made a proper apology for intruding : for we were *so* polite to each other ! we made such beautiful curtsies,” and the lovely Carew, in the reaction of her spirits, her sudden and indescribable relief of mind, made various low genuflexions, with equal grace and vivacity.

“ Charming girl !” murmured Mr. Francis ; “ how exquisitely ‘ she would dance the *minuet de la cour* !”

“ All I know,” continued Selby, “ is, that she requests to see either the master or the mistress of the house—no, I beg her pardon, she called it the mansion : her language, I assure you, deserves to be given verbatim. But now I must put on my hat : I am so distressed to keep Mr. Fothergill waiting !”

“ Francis,” said Mrs. Luttrell, “ do me the favour to stand for your brother’s representative, and find out for me what this unaccountable person wants ;” and her substitute departed forthwith.

The conference was a long one : so long, indeed, that Mr. Fothergill declared every minute that they must set off, and that it would be late in the night before they reached London ; but, though nobody urged him to stay a moment longer, he could not bear to go with his curiosity unsatisfied about this strange lady : it was altogether a sort of petty adventure calculated to interest his small mind. At last the drawing-room bell rang, there was a stir ; the


visitor was departing, and some of the most inquisitive of the party—Fanny and Mr. Fothergill jostling each other for a sight—managed to obtain a glimpse of her retreating figure.

It was, indeed, all that Selby had described it—vulgar in the extreme: her face was not to be discerned; but the wide dimensions of her person, and its gaudy attire, were plainly perceptible, as, with many low curtseys and a world of ceremony, she seemed to be taking leave of Mr. Francis. Even Esther now caught the general infection of curiosity, and boldly advanced near enough to overhear something of the stranger's parting speech.

It appeared she was thanking Mr. Francis for the attention he had shewn her during their interview, for the words "gracious affability," and "benevolence of heart," were to be distinguished, just as Esther came within hearing.

"And I return you my solemn assurance, sir," she proceeded, "that nothing but the wrongs of an injured female—wounded in the tenderest point, the affections of the heart (and also the loss of property)—should have induced me to make use of such ungenteel language in speaking of a relation of yours, and your honourable house; but we must all of us lose a little of our native polish when we talk about such a scoundrel as that!" and she ground the words, as it might be, between her teeth, and shook her parasol relentlessly.

"Precisely, ma'am," said Mr. Francis, with grave formality, and motioning her towards the door: but



she stood fast, and would not stir a step till she had finished her speech.

"I only wish, sir, I could forget my wrongs: it would be better for me, and a *great deal* better for him: I can promise him that! But I can't, Mr. Luttrell: in justice to my sex, I can't allow the rascal to go unpunished: the female public has received an outrage in my person; and it is my duty to stand like a lion in the path."

Mr. Francis, aware, perhaps, that his daughter was within hearing, suggested an amendment: "*Lioness*," said he.

"Lion or lioness, Mr. Luttrell; no matter what sort of beast I may seem to be, so that I roar loud enough to bring him to his deserts: and though people have told me it is not a hanging matter, I have great hopes they are misinformed—very strong hopes, indeed; and, as sure as my name *was* Bradshaw, and *ought* to be Carew, I will do all I can to bring him to the gallows. I am aware, Mr. Luttrell, it may not seem quite delicate to say so much in the honourable presence in which I stand."

"On the contrary, madam, I applaud your resolution, and recommend your carrying it into effect as quickly as possible: open the chaise door, there; the lady is coming."

"Yes, Mr. Luttrell, sir, such are my sentiments, and I should disgrace the name of woman if I was ashamed to avow them. But, as I said before, sir, I look upon myself as the humble representative of the female public; and, as such, it would give me heart-

felt pleasure to see him strung up over the threshold of my own virtuous doorway."

"Exactly so, ma'am, I perceive the force of your reasoning; but I am pressed for time, and must wish you a good-morning."

"Sir, I shall make it a duty, on all occasions, to speak of your polite attention to a heart-broken female; and I wish you and your honourable family health and happiness, and better luck with all the rest of your relations;" and, with one more prolonged curtsey, the stranger finally took leave.

"What on earth, does all this mean?" exclaimed Miss Luttrell, running up to where her father was standing, looking thoughtfully after the strange visitor.

"It means, Esther," he replied, in a graver tone than she had expected, "that if that woman is neither mad nor intoxicated,—I have great hopes she may prove to be both,—our cousin, John Carew, must be one of the most accomplished scoundrels that ever trod the earth!"

"I never thought quite so favourably of him as the rest of you: but what has he been doing now?"

"Only committing bigamy," and Mr. Francis lowered his voice: "marrying this woman, when he was already the husband of Mrs. Carew, of Bath."

"Good God! what a horrible disgrace to all connected with him! It was the second marriage, then?"

"Yes, happily; or the case would have been desperately bad, indeed."

"But this woman, sir; is she to be trusted, think you?"

Mr. Francis shook his head. "I hope not, Esther; but things wear a suspicious aspect: she has shewn me the certificate of her marriage, and though I examined it narrowly, I cannot say it bears any manifest evidence of being a forgery. But, hush! Not a word of this before Miss Carew: poor girl! she'll hear of it soon enough, if this woman's threat of prosecution is carried into effect. Heavens! what a blow it will be to that delicate-minded creature, so gifted with the finest sentiment!"

"Yes—yes, I pity her very much; but I wish she and her sentiment were fairly out of the house. That stupid old man won't stir till his curiosity is satisfied: do send them off, sir, if you can."

The eager party were now upon them, and questions of "Who is she?" "What is she?" burst from every tongue.

Mr. Francis evaded the interrogation as best he could. "Oh, it was an idle story—long and stupid; a mistake, in fact: most probably, a mere mistake, not worth repeating. But, bless me!" he exclaimed, taking out his watch as he caught the inquiring gaze of Mr. Fothergill; "my dear sir, I would not hurry you on any account, but are you aware of the time? I should be loth to have you and your two fair charges benighted on your road."

The hint was broad enough even for the faculties it was intended to excite: the word benighted conveyed not merely an unpleasant impression in itself, but brought with it certain faint notions of highway-

men, which Mr. Fothergill had never been able to expel from his mind ever since he was a little boy of eight years old, with flaxen ringlets, knee-breeches, and a gold-laced cocked hat; when, as he was crossing Hounslow Heath, under the shadow of the maternal wing, a specimen of that obsolete race had stopped the carriage, and politely requested a little ready money. The effect upon his nerves was indelible: it is probable that nothing less than the shrill whistle of the railroad could quite have succeeded in reassuring the old widower on this point; and that evidence of civilization he was certainly never destined to hear. To the end of his days would he continue to cast a timid glance round every wild heath, and thistley common: in short, wherever a goose was discernible, must he always suspect the possible existence of a highwayman.

But now Mr. Fothergill is waiting for us, and not we for him: he prepares to take leave; which, in his formal and hesitating way, is a tedious ceremony to those who know, from the countenance of Mr. Francis, that he has something important to tell them, as soon as the old gentleman and his ladies are fairly out of hearing.

All her worst presentiments take possession of Selby: as she exchanges a parting embrace with Mrs. Luttrell, she scarcely attempts to conceal her emotion, but suffers her tears to flow fast, as she presses Hartley's mother to her aching heart.

The adieux of the Marshams are, to all appearance, equally tender; for much kissing ensues between mother and child: some of these salutes being solemn

and serious events, ending with a loud report ; while others, that we may liken to the lesser artillery, go off smart and quick, and are charged (as is the Marsham fashion) with a little squabbling. Not even the prospective glories of her condition, as bridesmaid-elect, can keep Fanny's eyes quite dry, as she adjures her mother not to leave her long alone with that horrid old gentleman ! and adds a coaxing reminder concerning the promised cake—that cake which is to be specially directed to herself, and is warranted not to be too wholesome. Mrs. Marsham, in the most caressing language, pledges herself to everything her daughter chooses to ask ; and, turning suddenly upon Mr. Fothergill, exhorts him to take care of her dear Fanny ; who, as being now her only unmarried child, may be considered the sole remaining treasure she can truly call “all her own.”

If my cousin Marsham cared a straw about sending the old gentleman away in good spirits, she could not have hazarded a more injudicious speech than this, bringing full to his remembrance the heavy weight and awful responsibility of the office she had forced upon him. From that moment a decent fortitude was all he could sustain, and he made his parting compliments with much the same air with which a well-bred convict shakes hands with his gaolers, returns thanks to the ordinary, and makes a respectful bow to the sheriff, ere he issues from the press-room to the gallows. He knew there was not the remotest hope of a reprieve ; and, as he had done scores of times before, submitted himself to the will of woman, with melancholy resignation.

The family coach is put in motion, and proceeds, at a smooth and easy pace, down the broad avenue of elms which forms the noble approach to Horton Hall ; but no friendly group stands loitering in the sunshine to watch its progress as it diminishes to a speck in the distance, for all are busy listening to what Mr. Francis has to communicate.

The story seems to have little to distinguish it from the ordinary annals of vulgar crime and fraud which every newspaper is able to furnish. When divested of the extraneous circumstances with which the original narrator had embellished it, and out of which Mr. Francis had some difficulty in ascertaining the exact weight and nature of her evidence, there remained the broad and astounding fact, that Carew, some fifteen years ago, had frequented the house of this woman, who kept an inn, or hotel (as she chose to call it), at Portsmouth ; and there, not contented with running up a bill which he was unable to pay, he had completed his dissolute course by making love to his hostess, marrying and, shortly afterwards, deserting her. The fact of his being already a married man was not long in reaching her ears ; but, before she could take measures for obtaining legal redress of her wrongs, she learned that her deceiver had sailed for a three years voyage. Then came the wreck of the *Spiteful*, and her revenge was effectually superseded by the supposed death of the offender. From time to time, indeed, a report had arisen amongst his old associates, that Carew had, in some miraculous manner, escaped the general destruction on board this vessel, and was still pursuing, in



other society, and various parts of the globe, the wild career in which his youth had been embarked. But, to them Mrs. Bradshaw gave little heed, for they were often contradictory, and seldom respectably attested. At one time he was said to have been seen at Jamaica, at another at New York; anon he had been hailed by a friend at Amsterdam, and presently was reported to be paying his addresses, under the title of Captain Walker, of the India service, to a rich widow in the neighbourhood of Norwich.

There was something, perhaps, in the nature of this last report, so characteristic of Carew's peculiar propensities, that it ought to have made rather more impression on the deserted hostess than it seems to have done; but she still remained sceptical as to his real existence, until the previous spring; when, as we have seen, Carew had been met and accosted in the streets of Bath by a relation of Mrs. Bradshaw's, who had known him under his real name, and heard of him under his assumed one: and, though he had attempted to evade notice, the man was so persuaded of his identity that he prosecuted his inquiries, and transmitted their result to his honoured aunt, the hostess of the Red Lion—we should say the late hostess; for, latterly, Mrs. Bradshaw had retired from business, and set up for a lady—a character she had always conceived herself to possess a remarkable capacity for filling.

The consequence of this information was, Mrs. Bradshaw's proceeding immediately to Bath, in order to confront Carew; by the time she arrived, however, he, warned by the unwelcome sight of an old acquain-

tance, was no longer to be found gaily escorting his wife and daughter from square to crescent. Bath boasted no more the agreeable Mr. Carew amongst its liveliest attractions, and all his pursuer could do there—it was but poor compensation—was to visit Mrs. Carew, and overwhelm her with the news of her husband's delinquencies.

Such was the narrative which Mr. Francis had to tell to his wondering family. At first it gained but little credit, even when taken distinct from the embellishments with which it had come fresh to the ears of Mr. Francis: the vulgar tautology, coarse invective, and incongruous affectation of sentiment; it was of a character too utterly opposed to the moral and refined tone of manners at Horton, to be received as even possible. It required long and earnest discussion to familiarize them with the idea that the gentleman-like, well-mannered Mr. Carew, from whom they had so lately parted, could be the disreputable being here represented; and when they cast their eyes back years ago on what he had then been, or seemed to be, it became still more difficult to identify the generous, open-hearted cousin John, thoughtless to a fault, and candid to excess (for in such a light had he always appeared to them) with the low-minded betrayer of Mrs. Bradshaw. Mrs. Damer, who generally took the lead in the family councils, designated the accusation as a base and abominable calumny!

In early life, when poor Carew was amongst the gayest and most thoughtless of his age and profession, it was well-known he had fallen into idle courses, and had no doubt—simple, unsuspecting mid-

shipman that he was—associated occasionally with the vicious and the frail; with many a one, in short, capable of taking advantage of his openness of character, and laying a lying charge against him for some base purpose of their own: the slander evidently came from some such person, and would be discovered in the end to be based on some vile and mercenary motive.”

But Carew’s warmest champion could not but remember that, even when his reputation had seemed at its fairest point, there had been many a whispered hint and doubtful inuendo, indignantly repelled by them, but it must be allowed, never wholly disproved; which did not argue much for the high principle and strict integrity of cousin John. And this mysterious disappearance of his for so many years; had it yet been satisfactorily accounted for? or had any one of the family acquired a clear idea of what Carew had been doing in his absence? Something had been sure to occur to interrupt the current of his history of past events; or he had himself diverged into some digression, natural enough as it had seemed at the time, but which in the end had obliged him to defer the continuation of his memoirs till a more convenient season.

Above all, there was this story of Mr. Pickering’s, now no longer to be discredited; and only to be accounted for by supposing that Carew had fabricated the account of his wife’s death and his own distressed condition, in order to obtain money from his noble and too credulous kinsman. The manner in which, for that end, he had played upon the susceptibility of the

newly-made widower, shewed a cool premeditation, and an aptitude in the line of fraud and chicanery, which could neither be palliated nor winked at; and as these things rose to the reluctant minds of the Luttrels, their defence of cousin John grew fainter; and even Mrs. Damer at last sat silent and confounded. It was, however, agreed on all sides that Carew was not to be condemned unheard: he should be written to forthwith.

“Or what say you to my going up to town, and ascertaining the truth by a personal inquiry?” said Mr. Francis, with a briskness in his manner that did not escape his daughter. “In my opinion, there is nothing like a *viva voce* communication.”

Miss Luttrell looked blank, and her aunt burst into a joyful exclamation:—“It was the very thing I was wishing! For I know, Francis, you will interest yourself almost as much about the daughter as the father; and my heart quite bleeds to think how that sweet girl will be distressed if she should hear of this, and how awkwardly she may be circumstanced: and that unfortunate Mrs. Carew, too!”

“Oh! *she* can take care of herself, Isabella,” said Mrs. Damer, impatiently; the old leaven fermenting within her at that still obnoxious name. “Mrs. John has always seemed perfectly equal to the difficulties of her situation: at least, we may presume so, from the manner in which she repulsed *our* civilities. Ah! if she had never crossed his path, John Carew might not have turned out the good-for-nothing fellow he is! Not that I say a word in his favour: I have done with him now”—said the old lady, as she

arose to leave the room, with a sorrowful shake of the head—"and a sad, sad thing it is, at my time of life, to have to give up one of the few beings towards whom we can feel a tenderness. God knows ! I had not such a very high opinion of him, after all ; but I did not think it would have come to this. Ah ! Mr. Pickering, if your story had come true, it might have been better for all parties : even for the poor woman herself, whom you and Lord Elderton were so anxious to bury genteelly. Let me see ! How many mourning coaches did you allow Mrs. John ?"

But Mr. Pickering, now that the laugh was not so much against him, could afford to join in it himself ; and, being extremely fond of gossip, and anxious to know the event of the Carew case, he volunteered accompanying Mr. Francis back to London.

"He had many inducements," he said, "for wishing to be in Great George-street just now : especially with regard to Mr. Luttrell, with whom he flattered himself he had some degree of influence, and whom he was trying to persuade to call in Dr. Heavyside—eh ? Doesn't it strike you, that I ought to be in the way ?"

This was an excellent—in fact, an undeniable plea, for whirling up to London again, almost before he had shaken off the metropolitan dust from his shoes. Yes, shoes !—for men in those days did wear shoes. They wore them with tight pantaloons, and little Pickwickian black gaiters ; and no one who had seen the small spare form of the alert and Reverend Thomas Pickering in this his long accustomed and ordinary attire, would have fancied that he could be

identified in any other. But "holloa, my fancy? whither wouldst thou flee?" Woe to the writer who digresses at the end of his second volume, even on a grave question of costume; for it gives the judicious reader thereby some right to suppose that he has hardly matter enough to fill his third.

Be that as it may, Mr. Pickering had another motive for his journey, which he did not specify; and perhaps hardly himself suspected the influence it really had upon his conduct. But short as had been the time since the little man's arrival from town, he had seen enough to inform him of a new feature in the politics of Horton. He had caught certain quiet but expressive looks passing between Miss Luttrell and Mrs. Grey, and had noted the ungracious turn of countenance and manner with which any allusion to Miss Carew, and especially any commendation of her, was received by the former; and he, understanding well the ways of the place, came straight to the conclusion that Esther was afraid of that young lady's influence over the not-unsusceptible Mr. Francis: nay, he went a little farther still, and fancied that the filial apprehension was not devoid of foundation.

Little more than a month ago, he had left the proprietor of Horton Lodge as sober and staid, in his dress and demeanour, as it behoves any gentleman verging on threescore years to be; ever cheerful and alive to passing events, for that formed a part, and an agreeable one, of his character; but smooth, serene, and equable, and over head and ears, as it were, in educational matters. Now,

not a word saluted Mr. Pickering concerning "my son Harold's wonderful progress" in this branch of study, or "my little Louisa's striking facility" in the other. When he presented Mr. Francis with a set of mathematical instruments, which that gentleman had made a great point of his obtaining for him at a celebrated shop in the city, and mentioned the price of a small electrifying machine; and also made reference to a something or other accounted indispensable for the study of optics, his friend stared at him with an abstracted gaze: it was plainly an effort to him to carry his mind back to the subjects which had so lately engrossed it.

During the memorable and dangerous period when Miss Blenkinsop dominated over the school-room at Horton Lodge, and was supposed to have slightly fascinated its master, it fell out as a sort of professional necessity, that the Muses should bear an equal share with the Graces in this incipient flirtation; but now, to judge by appearances, those nine respectables were voted pedantic and prosy, and Mr. Francis was sacrificing only to the frivolous three. He had shaken off the elderly stoop that was fast settling on his well-made shoulders, and moved with a loftier and more jaunty air; and it required no advancement in the science of optics, to perceive that the thin scattering of gray hairs, which had hitherto been combed into formal precision, were now cut and trimmed after quite another fashion: a small peak, or *chevaux de frize*, as it were, had arisen around that part of the head most inclined to baldness, and there were two little white wings at the ears.

On the whole the change might be called becoming, and it was also significant; for well did Mr. Pickering remember, that it was in the time of Miss Blenkinsop, the fair governess so often alluded to, that that little snowy eminence had first been encouraged to bristle: almost as soon as the fair instructress had received her dismissal, which she did the moment Esther became suspicious of the state of affairs, the peak had subsided into its original insignificance; but now it was more strongly developed than ever, and the wings were a decided novelty. Then, that coat! When had Mr. Francis ever been seen in a bright blue coat? Such a phenomenon was quite enough, of itself, to shew that something was in the wind: but on this point, we think Mr. Pickering's critical remarks might have been sharpened by a hint from Mrs. Grey; who, though she admitted the importance of the garment, taken as a whole, would always end by observing,—“After all, Esther, it isn't the cut of the coat, or its colour either, that I mistrust, it's those fancy buttons: I shouldn't care for anything, my dear, if it wasn't for the buttons!”

And so the event of Mr. Pickering's observations was a resolution of accompanying Mr. Francis Luttrell back to Great George-street; where he might keep a sharp look-out on that gentleman's movements, and discover, after his own inquisitive fashion, in what degree Miss Luttrell's fears on the present occasion were justified by circumstances.



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